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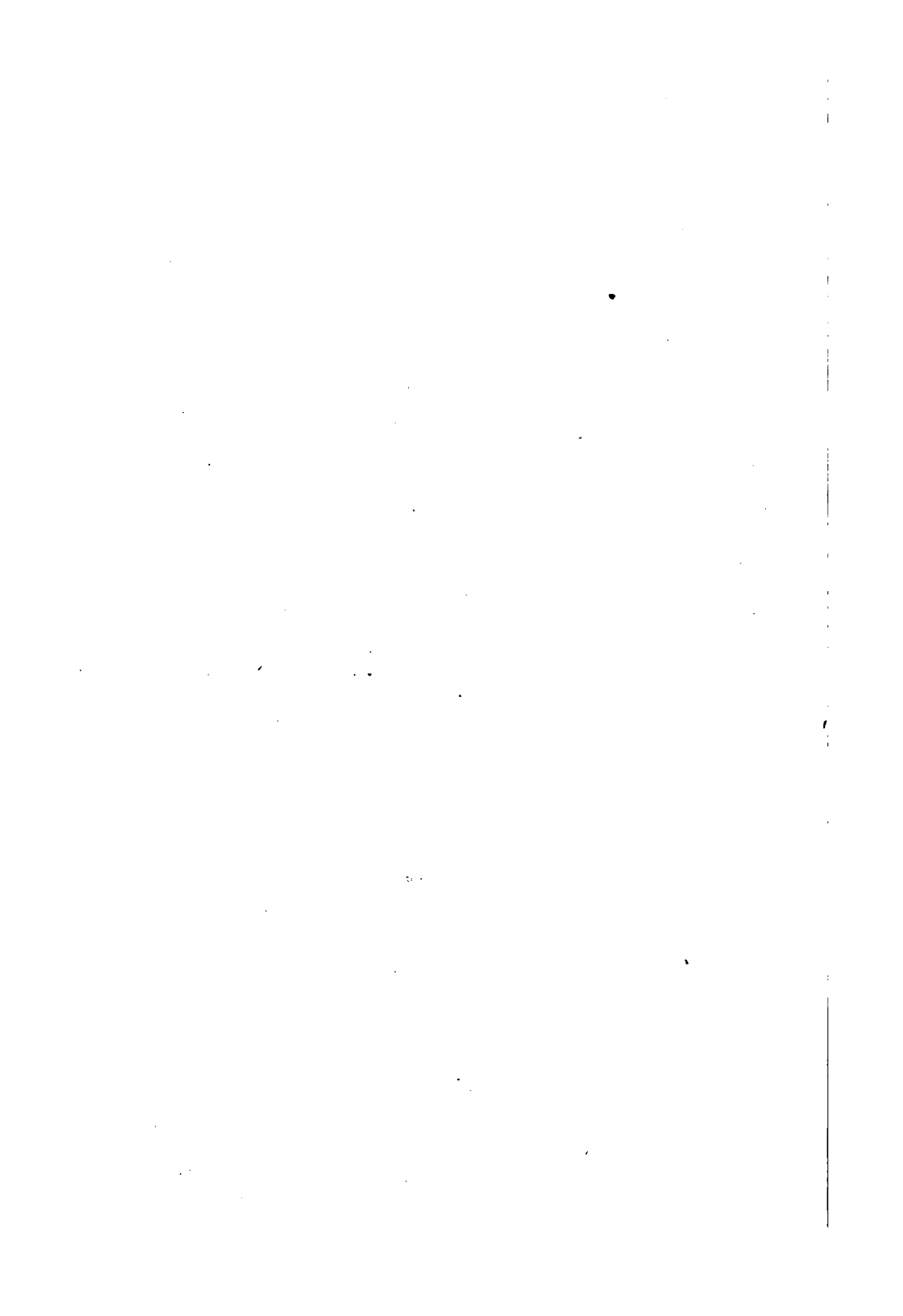




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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES
ON THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.
VOL. I.

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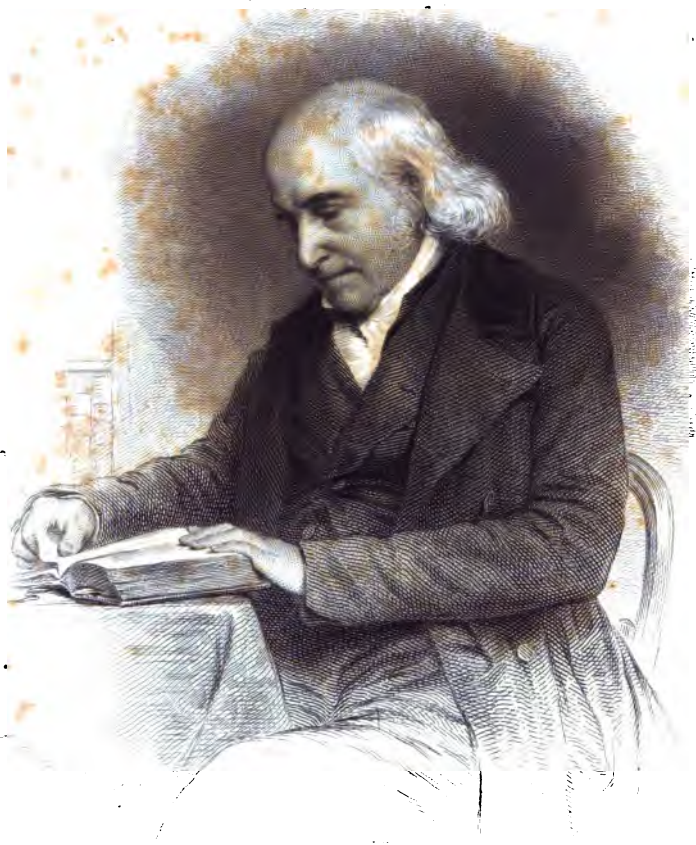
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John Brown

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

R.

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EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO.

1866.

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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

BY JOHN BROWN, D.D.,

SENIOR MINISTER OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION, BROUGHTON
PLACE, EDINBURGH, AND PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY
TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

ΕΙΠΕ ΔΕ 'Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΙΜΩΝ, ΣΙΜΩΝ . . . ΣΤ ΠΟΤΕ ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΑΣ
ΣΤΗΡΙΜΩΝ ΤΟΤΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΤΣ ΣΟΤ.—ΔΟΤΚ. ΚΒ' λσ' λγ'.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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Scriptura non potest intelligi theologicè, nisi antea intellecta sit grammaticè.

MELANTHON.

Interpretationem librorum sacrorum esse summum idemque difficillimum Theologi munus, ipsa res, et ratio, et usus, et omnium meliorum seculorum consensus docet. Nam omnis certa veritatis divinæ et scientia, et defensio, e sacrarum literarum intelligentia et accurata interpretatione ducitur; et cum interpretandarum literarum sacrarum studio, et lapsa et restituta est religionis Christianæ puritas.

ERNESTI.



TO THE
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION OF
BROUGHTON PLACE,

AND SPECIALLY

TO HIS FELLOW-LABOURER IN WORD AND DOCTRINE,
THE REVEREND ANDREW THOMSON, B.A.,

AND THE OTHER

BRETHREN OF THE ELDERSHIP,

WILLIAM RENTON, JAMES GREIG, JAMES YOUNG,
JAMES CORNWALL, ADAM GIB ELLIS, WILLIAM MATHESON,
GEORGE CLARK, ROBERT ELLIS, JAMES LAWRIE, JAMES LEECHMAN,
JAMES MARSHALL, JAMES LEISHMAN, GEORGE M'MILLAN,
GEORGE BARTHOLOMEW, WILLIAM CALDERWOOD,

THESE EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES
ARE RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

“Brethren, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”

2 PET. i. 12-15.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE work now laid before the public is substantially a Commentary, though in a form somewhat peculiar. It is not a continuous comment on words and clauses, nor does it consist of scholia or annotations, nor of lectures in the sense in which that word is ordinarily employed in this country, nor of sermons, either on select passages, or on the successive verses of the sacred book which is its subject. The Epistle is divided into paragraphs, according to the sense—of course varying very considerably in length. Each of these paragraphs, embodying one leading thought, forms the subject of a separate discourse, in which an attempt is made to explain whatever is difficult in the phraseology, and to illustrate the doctrinal or practical principles which it contains ; the object being not to discuss, in a general and abstract manner, the subjects which the text may suggest, but to bring clearly out the Apostle's statements, and their design ; and to show how the statements are fitted to gain the objects for which they are made. If the Author has been able in any good measure to realize his own idea, grammatical and logical interpretation have been combined ; and the Exposition will be found at once exegetical, doctrinal, and practical.

Whatever can be interesting and intelligible only to the scholar, has been thrown into the notes. Had the Author yielded to his own tastes, these notes would probably have been more numerous and elaborate than they are. But the recollection of the primary design of the work checked the inclination to indulge in philological remark; though he trusts that in almost every instance, where the exegesis is difficult or doubtful, the foundation of the interpretation adopted has been indicated with sufficient clearness.

The translation of the Epistle, though prefixed to the Expository Discourses, was written after them, and indeed contains a condensed statement of the result of the Author's investigations. This accounts for the fact that, in an instance or two, the sense given in the translation slightly differs from that commented on in the Exposition.

To prevent disappointment, it is right to state, that the object of the Author has been to produce not so much an original work, as a satisfactory exposition. In his estimate of the duties of an interpreter of Scripture, next to the careful study of the original text, ranks the attentive reading of what has been published for the illustration of it. Under this conviction he has studied the Epistle, not only without note or comment, but with all the notes and comments within his reach; and the book he now respectfully lays before the Church contains the substance of all that in his thoughts and reading seemed best fitted to illustrate the meaning and promote the objects of the inspired writer. Of the helps of which he has availed himself, a list is fur-

nished at the close of these prefatory remarks. He has distinguished by an asterisk those to which he has been chiefly indebted.

There is one author to whom his obligations are peculiarly great—ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.¹ The index bears witness to the number of references to “The Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of St Peter;” and in perusing the Discourses, the reader will find many quotations from its pages. That very remarkable work teaches a singularly pure and complete theology—a theology thoroughly evangelical, in the true sense of that often abused epithet, being equally free from Legalism on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other; in a spirit of enlightened and affectionate devotion, love to the brotherhood, and charity to all men; and in a style which, though very unequal, indicates in its general structure a familiarity with the classic models of antiquity, and in occasional expressions is in the highest degree felicitous and beautiful. As a biblical expositor, LEIGHTON was above his own age; and as a theologian and an experimental and practical writer, few have equalled, still fewer surpassed him, either before or since his time.²

For these quotations the Author expects thanks from his readers, most of whom are not likely to be very familiar with the Archbishop’s writings; and, though not unaware of the hazard to which he has exposed his own homely

¹ “A beautiful writer, and one of the best of men.”—SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

² “Chrysostom’s was the right method of preaching. Leighton’s Lectures on Peter approach very near to that method.”—CECIL.

manufacture, by inserting into it—it may be, often somewhat inartificially—portions from a web of such rich material and exquisite workmanship, he will greatly rejoice if these specimens induce his readers to cultivate a more extensive acquaintance with those truly precious remains; which, though labouring under more than the ordinary disadvantages of posthumous publications, through the extreme slovenliness with which they, with but few exceptions, were in the first instance edited, are eminently fitted to form the Student of Theology to sound views and a right spirit, and to minister to the instruction and delight of the private Christian: possessing, in large measure and rare union, those qualities which must endear them to every Christian mind, however uncultured; and those which are fitted to afford high gratification to them in whom the knowledge and love of evangelical truth are connected with literary attainment and polished taste.¹ The experience of Dr Doddridge's correspondent² is not singular: "There is a spirit in ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON I never met with in any human writings,³ nor can I read many lines in them without being moved." COLERIDGE⁴ borrowed his texts

¹ "Leighton I can recommend to readers of every class: the most literate and refined, and the most illiterate."—M'CRIE.

² Dr Henry Miles.

³ "Archbishop Leighton was a pattern of Christian perfection. His writings bear a close resemblance to early English divinity; but in sublime piety, and often in strokes of natural but most exalted eloquence, they are not excelled but by the sacred writers. A more apostolic man never lived; and his genius was not only vivid, but sublime. In the far greater part of his works, he really deserves to stand very near the inspired writers."—ALEX. KNOX.

⁴ Coleridge states that one of his principal objects in his *Aids to*

from him, in his *Aids to Reflection*; and it is readily acknowledged, that these volumes owe to him their most attractive ornaments.

The Author would probably never have thought of offering these illustrations to the world, had not a number of much respected members of his congregation earnestly solicited him, before increasing age should make it difficult, or approaching death impossible, to furnish them with a permanent memorial of a ministry of considerable length, full of satisfaction to him, and, he trusts, not unproductive of advantage to them. Such an application could not be treated lightly; and on weighing the subject, he found that he durst not refuse to comply with it.

Having arrived at this conviction, it did not appear to him that the object in view could be better gained, than by presenting them with the substance of those illustrations of

Reflection, was "to exhibit from the works of Leighton, who perhaps of all our learned Protestant theologians best deserves the title of a spiritual divine, an instructive and affecting picture of the contemplations, reflections, conflicts, consolations, and monitory experiences of a philosophic and richly gifted mind, amply stored with all the knowledge that books and long intercourse with men of the most discordant characters could give, under the impression and habits of a spiritual religion."—*Aids*, p. 117. The following is the opinion of a more adequate judge than Coleridge: "If asked what work comes nearest to the Scriptures, we would answer, though with some consideration, and consequently hesitation, the writings of Leighton. He has not the fervid genius nor the commanding views of gospel truth which Luther possessed; nor the clear and philosophic understanding of Calvin; nor that peculiar solemnity of Howe, which places the reader on the verge of eternity; but he has a portion of all the excellences of the most excellent men, and a very deep infusion of the Christian spirit peculiarly his own. The character of his writings is eminently heavenly and catholic, and these two qualities go together and influence each other. There are no sects or denominations in heaven."—*Douglas's Passing Thoughts*, p. 287.

a very precious portion of the inspired volume, which had already been delivered to them in the ordinary course of pastoral instruction. That this offering, intended for their spiritual improvement and their children's, will be accepted in the spirit in which it is made, he knows them too well to entertain a doubt; and if to them it serve its great objects, he will have an abundant reward. If beyond these limits it should find a favourable reception, and produce salutary effects, this will be an additional subject of agreeable reflection and grateful acknowledgment.

10, GAYFIELD SQUARE, *May* 1848.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IT would be doing violence to a conviction of duty, as well as to a feeling of propriety, were the Author to allow the Second Edition of these "Expository Discourses" to go forth without an expression of gratitude for the kind reception they have met with, first, to his Master, the advancement of whose cause was their ultimate design,—and then to his brethren, the promotion of whose spiritual improvement was their immediate purpose. He is deeply convinced that these two indissolubly connected objects are to be gained by the same means,—the illustration of the Divine Word; and the assurance that he has in any degree succeeded in the effectual employment of that means, is abundant compensation—great reward for any measure of labour.

The work appears, in substance and form, materially unchanged. The Author has, however, availed himself of the opportunity furnished by the reprint of giving it a thorough revision, and trusts that it will be found upon the whole improved. If it be so, it is owing in no small degree to kind suggestions from his literary friends, which are gratefully acknowledged. Among those benefactors, he must be permitted to specify his venerable kinsman, the Rev. HENRY THOMSON, D.D., Penrith, and his esteemed friend, the Rev. JOHN TAYLOR, M.D., Auchtermuchty. The minute and laborious examination to which the latter spontaneously submitted, is felt as the highest compliment he could have paid to the work, and one of the greatest favours he could have bestowed on its Author. Another valued friend, the Rev. WILLIAM PRINGLE, of Auchterarder, has materially contributed to the superior accuracy of this Edition, by affording it the advantage of his singularly acute eye in the revision of the sheets as they passed through the press, and to its superior usefulness, by the corrected and enlarged Indices which he has furnished.

Though a considerable number of additional Notes has been inserted, it has been found practicable, by adopting a somewhat fuller page, and omitting the Discourses appended to the original Edition, to present the Work to the Public at once at a lower price and in a more commodious form.

J. B.

10, GAYFIELD SQUARE, *October 1849.*

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

A NEW EDITION of these valuable Discourses having become necessary, the Publishers have thought it advisable, with consent of the Author's Trustees, to produce them in a different shape from the former volumes, and at a rather cheaper rate. In preparing this re-issue, the Publishers have been favoured by Dr BROWN's family with the use of his own copy, containing his latest corrections and notes, all of which have been incorporated in the present Edition. The Publishers have also to express their obligations to the Rev. Dr EADIE of Glasgow, who, out of veneration for the memory of his late friend and colleague, has kindly revised the proofs.

EDINBURGH, *December* 1865.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

CONSULTED DURING THE COMPOSITION OF THESE EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

Besides the General Commentaries on the whole Scriptures, by *GROTIUS, LE CLERC, POOLE, HENRY, GOADBY, *S. CLARK, SCOTT, A. CLARKE, MANT, and D'OYLEY; and on the New Testament, by BEZA, E. SCHMIDT, MARLORATUS, *WOLFIUS, BEAUSOBRE and L'ENFANT, *BENGEL, KUTTNER, ROSENMÜLLER, HAMMOND, WHITBY, GUYSE, WELLS, DODDRIDGE, and GILPIN, the following works on the Apostolical Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and the Epistles of Peter, have been consulted :—

1. *JOANNIS CALVINI Commentarii in Epistolas Canonicas Petri, Joannis, Jacobi, et Judæ. Folio. Genevæ, 1554.
2. In priorem B. Petri Apostoli Canonicam Epistolam, eruditissimus Commentarius. Authore D. JOANNE HESSELIO, Regio Lovanii Professore. 8vo. Lovanii, 1568.
3. *ΟΙΚΟΜΕΝΙΟΥ Ἐξηγήσεις εἰς τὰς ἑπτὰ καθολικὰς λειτουργίας ἐπιστολάς. OECUMENII Expositio in septem illas, quæ Catholicæ dicuntur, Epistolas. Cum interpretatione latina Joannis Hentenii. 4to. Francofurti, 1610.
4. *Paraphrase sur les Epistres Catholiques, par MOYSE AMYRAUT. 8vo. Samur, 1646.
5. An Exposition of all St Paul's Epistles; together with an explanation of those other Epistles of the Apostles St James, Peter, John, and Jude, by DAVID DICKSON, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow. Folio. Lond. 1659.
6. Urim et Thummim, seu exegesis Epistolarum Petri et Joannis. Autore D. JOANNE LANGIO, SS. Prof. Theol. in Acad. Hal. ii. tom. folio. Halæ, 1734.
7. *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Seven (commonly called) Catholic Epistles, attempted in imitation of Mr Locke's manner; to which are annexed several Critical Dissertations, by GEORGE BENSON, D.D. 4to. Lond. 1756.
8. Epistolarum Catholicarum Septenarius Græce, cum nova versione latina ac scholiis grammaticis et criticis. Opera Jo. B. CARPZOVII. 8vo. Halæ, 1790.
9. D. SAM. FRED. NATH. MORI Prælectiones in Jacobi et Petri Epistolas. Edidit Car. Aug. Donat. 8vo. Lipsiæ, 1794.
10. A New Literal Translation, from the Original Greek, of all the Apostolical Epistles; with a Commentary and Notes, philological, critical, explanatory, and practical, by JAMES MACKNIGHT, D.D. 4 vols. 4to. Edin. 1795.
11. Versio Latina Epistolarum Novi Testamenti, perpetua annotatione illustrata a GODF. SIGISM. JASPIIS. ii. tom. 8vo. Lipsiæ, 1797.
12. *Epistolæ Catholicæ Græce, perpetua annotatione illustratæ a DAV. JUL. PORR. 2 vols. 8vo. Gotting. 1810.

13. Conciones in Epistolam primam Petri habitæ per D. MEINHARDUM SCHOTANUM, SS. T. P. in Academia Franequerensi. 4to. Franecker, 1637.
14. Sermons on the First Epistle General of Saint Peter, by NICHOLAS BYFIELD. Folio. Lond. 1637.
15. S. Apostoli Petri Epistola Catholica prior, perpetuo Commentario explicata, una cum partitione tum generali totius Epistolæ ac singulorum capitum, tum speciali singulorum versuum; necnon cum observatione doctrinarum ex singulis vocibus per JACOBUM LAURENTIUM, Amstelodamensem. 4to. Campis, 1640.
16. DAVIDIS PAREI, Commentarii in Epistolas Canonicas Jacobi, Petri et Judæ. 8vo. Geneva, 1641.
17. Utriusque Epistolæ Divi Petri Apostoli Explicatio Analytica, documentis suis ubique illustrata et usibus ad singularem pietatis profectum applicata. Authore GULIELMO AMESIO, SS. T. D. 24to. Amst. 1650.
18. JONÆ SLICHTINGH A BUKOWIEK Commentarius in priorem Apostoli Petri Epistolam Catholicam. Bib. Frat. Pol. vol. vii. Folio. Irenop. 1656.
19. JOANNIS CRELLII Franci Commentarius in prioris Epistolæ Petri partem. Bib. Frat. Pol. vol. iv. Folio. Eleuther. 1656.
20. *A Brief Exposition of the First and Second Epistle General of Peter, by ALEXANDER NISBET, Minister at Irwin. 12mo. Lond. 1658.
21. *Commentarius super priorem D. Petri Epistolam, in quo textus declaratur, quæstiones dubiæ solvuntur, observationes eruuntur, et loca in speciem pugnancia conciliantur. Opera et studio JOANNIS GERHARDI, SS. Th. Doc. 4to. Jenæ, 1660.
22. *A Practical Commentary on the First Epistle General of St Peter, by the Most Reverend Dr ROBERT LEIGHTON, sometime Archbishop of Glasgow. 2 vols. 4to. York and London, 1693, 4to.
23. D. JO. SAL. SEMLERI Paraphrasis in Epistolam I. Petri cum latine translationis varietate et multis notis. 12mo. Halæ, 1783.
24. *Exposition of the First Epistle of Peter, considered in reference to the whole System of Divine Truth. Translated from the German of WILHELM STEIGER, by the Reverend Patrick Fairbairn. 2 vols. 16mo. Edin. 1836.

The ANNOTATA in the CRITICI SACRI, tom. ix., by VALLA, ERASMUS, VATABLUS, CASTALIO, CLARIUS, ZEGERUS, H. STEPHANUS, DRUSIUS, CAMERO, and CAPELLUS, have been carefully looked at; and also the Notes in CAMERARIUS, RAPHELIUS, ELSNER, KNATCHBULL, KYPKE, PALAIRET, LÖESNER, AL. MORUS, ALBERTI, OTTIUS, KEUCHENIUS, HOMBERGK, BOS, HEINSIUS, BOWYER, SYMONDS, and WAKEFIELD.

The Author also gratefully notices the advantages he has derived from FLEETWOOD, STENNET, and JAY, on Relative Duties; from Bishop SANDERSON and JOSEPH FAWCETT, on Christian Freedom and Honouring all Men; from ANDREW FULLER, on the Duties of Church Members to their Office-bearers; and from Notes of a Sermon by BINNEY on Christian Courtesy. He has little doubt that there are both thoughts and expressions for which he is indebted to others, that are not expressly ascribed to their authors; but his readers will do him but justice in believing, that such obligations are not acknowledged, merely because they have not been observed.

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CHAPTER I.

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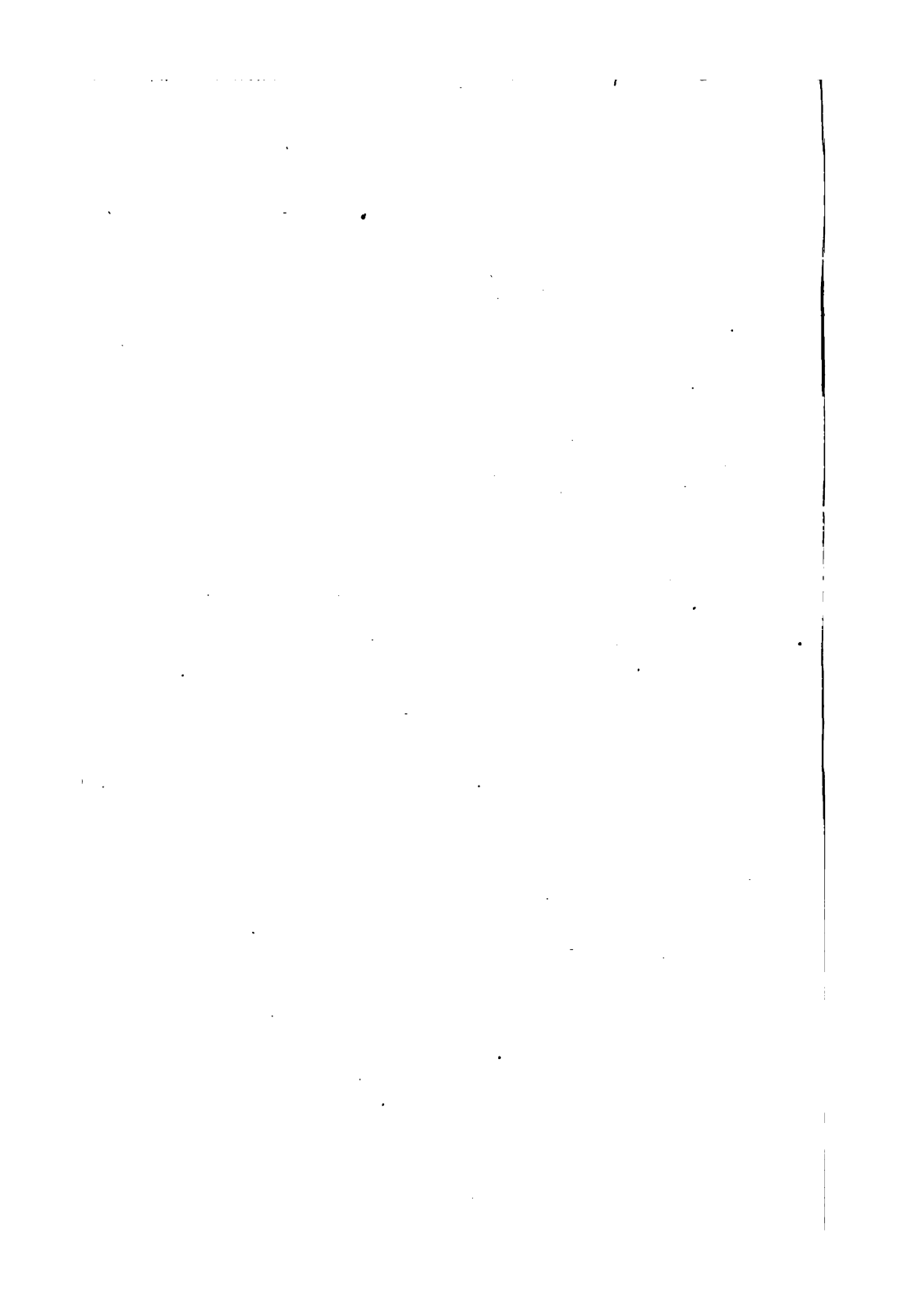
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Ver.

- the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 342; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed, 344, 352. But ye are a chosen generation, 279; a royal priesthood, 288; a holy nation, 295; a peculiar people, 303; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you, 312; out of darkness into his marvellous light, 249, 325; who in time past were not a people, 250; but are now the people of God, 332; which had not obtained mercy, 250; but now have obtained mercy, 336. Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, 366; abstain from fleshly lusts, 356; which war against the soul, 368; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, 362; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation, 370. Submit yourselves, 385; to every ordinance of man, 383; for the Lord's sake, 389; whether it be to the king as supreme, 388; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, 388; for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well, 383. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 393.

A TRANSLATION
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.



A TRANSLATION
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

I. 1 PETER, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elected sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cap-
2 padocia, Asia, and Bithynia—*elected* according to the fore-appointment of God the Father, by a spiritual separation, in order¹ to obedience,² and being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ:³ May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to the abundance of his mercy, has anew made us his children;⁴ so as to give us a living hope⁵ through the resurrection
4 of Jesus Christ from the dead; so as to make us

¹ BEZA's theology seems to have mastered his scholarship when he rendered *iv* as = *is*; by *ad*, and *is* as = *dis* by *per*. E. α. π. seems = in a state of spiritual separation, spiritually separated.

² Obedience of faith, of the truth, ver. 22; Rom. i. 5, xvi. 26, vi. 16, 17; Acts vi. 7.

³ Ut obedient, et Jesu Christi sanguine conspergantur.—CASTALIO. Ut obedient fidei, et aspergantur sanguine.—J. C. VATABLUS.

⁴ Chap. i. 23; James i. 18; John iii. 3, etc. Fait renaitre, autrement, regenerez.—BEAUSOBRE.

⁵ Amat Petrus Epitheton *vivus*.—BENGEL.

heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and
 5 unfading, secured in heaven for you,¹ who are pre-
 served² by the power of God through faith, till³ the
 salvation prepared to be revealed⁴ in the last time ;
 6 in which *time*⁵ you shall rejoice,⁶ who now for a
 short season (since it is needful), are sorrowful amid
 7 manifold trials, that the proof⁷ of your faith⁸ may
 be found⁹ much more valuable than that of gold
 (which, even though proved by fire, perisheth),
 resulting in¹⁰ praise, and honour, and glory, at the
 8 revelation of Jesus Christ ; whom, though you have
 not seen him, you love ; in whom, though now not
 looking on him but believing in him, you shall
 rejoice with an unspeakable and triumphant joy,¹¹
 9 receiving the end of your faith, soul-salvation ;¹²
 10 respecting which salvation, prophets who uttered
 predictions concerning this grace towards you, made
 11 inquiry and diligent search, examining what, and

¹ Some mss. of good note read *ἡμῶς*, us.

² Guarded. Gal. iii. 23.

³ *Εἰς*, till. Acts iv. 3 ; Phil. i. 10 ; Gal. iii. 13, 24 ; 1 Thess. iv. 15.
 We have a parallel phrase, 2 Pet. ii. 4, *τηρουμένους εἰς κρίσιν*.

⁴ By being bestowed.

⁵ *ὅτε* cannot grammatically refer to *σωτηρίαν*. Even although it did, as that salvation is future, the rejoicing in it must be future too. HARWOOD takes this view of it.

⁶ In quo exultabitis.—VULGATE.

⁷ *Δοκίμιον* is not = *δοκιμή*, Rom. v. 3 ; the last is the result of the first. Both here and James i. 3, it seems = *δοκιμασία*.

⁸ *Explorata vestra fides*.—CASTALIO. Your faith once tried.—COVERDALE ; MATTHEWS.

⁹ STEIGER, i. 136, 137. KNATCHBULL, 292.

¹⁰ ROBINSON. *Εἰς*. 3. α.

¹¹ *Exultabitis lætitia inenarrabili et glorificata*.—VULGATE.

¹² Hoc perinde valet ac si diceretur ; “salus æterna.” Est enim tacita comparatio vitæ mortalitatis et caducæ quæ ad corpus pertinet. 1 Cor. v. 5, *ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ*.—CALVIN.

what kind, of season,¹ the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when testifying beforehand of the sufferings in reference to Christ,² and the succeeding
 12 glories; to whom it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering those things, which have now been declared to you by those who, inspired by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, have proclaimed to you the good news; into which things angels earnestly inquire.³

13 Seeing these things are so, girding up the loins of your mind,⁴ being watchful,⁵ hope⁶ stedfastly⁷ for this grace, which is to be brought to you in
 14 the revelation⁸ of Jesus Christ. As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves by your former
 15 propensities in *your state of* ignorance, but in imitation of the holy one, who has called you,⁹ be you
 16 also holy in your whole behaviour; because it is

¹ The period and the circumstances. Quo et quali tempore.—JASPIS. In relation to whom, and what time.—PURVER. Quel tams, et quelle conjuncture.—BEAUSOBRE.

² Or the sufferings until Christ, that is, the manifold trials, till the revelation of Jesus Christ, v. 7.

³ James i. 25.

⁴ Lumbos succingimus ad iter, ad opus, ad bella, ad ministerium.—C. A LAPIDE. Prepared, ready for work or warfare, for toil or travel.

⁵ Vigilance, not moderation, seems the idea here. Awake to all events.

⁶ Τηλίκως ἡλπίζατε = κατέχοντε τὴν ἡλπίδα τηλίκως; or as the Apostle to the Hebrews has it, chap. iii. 6. Perfecte Sperate.—VULGATE.

⁷ Or perseveringly, τηλίκως.

⁸ At his second coming, when he shall be unveiled, manifested to be what he is. By the revelation.—HAMMOND. By the declaring.—COVERDALE; MATTHEWS; CRANMER. The figures here seem borrowed from Luke xii. 35, etc.

⁹ Literally "according to." Rom. xv. 5, κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, rendered in the margin "after the example of." Ad exemplum illius sancti qui vocavit vos.—ERAS. SCHMID.

17 written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' And since
 you call Father,¹ Him who judges the work of every
 man without respect of persons, pass the time of
 18 your sojourning in reverence of *him*; knowing that
 you have been ransomed from your foolish² here-
 ditary³ course of behaviour, not by corruptible
 19 things—silver or gold—but by precious blood, as⁴
 of a lamb, perfect and spotless, *the blood* of Christ;⁵
 20 fore-appointed, indeed, before the foundation of the
 world, but manifested in these last times, on
 21 account⁶ of you, who through him believe in God
 who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,
 so that your faith and hope are in God.⁷

22 Having purified your souls by the obedience of
 the truth, through the Spirit,⁸ so as sincerely from a
 pure heart, to love the brethren, love one another
 23 intensely, being anew made the children of God,
 not of a perishable race,⁹ but of an imperishable,

¹ Call on the Father.

² Eph. iv. 17.

³ Handed down from father to son.

⁴ 'Ος = ut, *ætiologia τῷ precioso*. —BENGEL.

⁵ For the rendering of this verse, which seems to me to bring out the apostle's precise sense very clearly and forcibly, I am indebted to my learned and ingenious colleague and much esteemed friend, the Rev. Dr EADIE.

⁶ On behalf of you.

⁷ SYMONDS.

⁸ διὰ πνεύματος. The evidence of the genuineness of this clause is so deficient, that MILL, BENGE, GRIESBACH, and LACHMANN would omit it. If genuine, its meaning is doubtful. It may qualify ὑπακοῇ = πνευματικῇ.

⁹ Σπέρμα, genus, proles. SCAPULA refers to Sophocles and Euripides, in support of this sense. The cognate word σπέρμα is often used in this way. John vii. 42, viii. 33, 37; Gal. iii. 16, 19, *et al.* If λόγος Θεοῦ be merely exegetical, would not the same preposition have been connected with it as with the word of which it is the interpretation?

through the living word of God, which endureth for
 24 ever; for "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of
 it¹ as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and
 25 its flower falleth off, but the word of the Lord
 endureth for ever." Now the gospel which has been
 proclaimed to you is this word.

II. 1 Laying aside, then, all malice, and all deceit, and
 simulations, and envyings, and all evil-speakings,
 2 like new-born babes, desire the unadulterated spiri-
 tual milk,² that by it you may grow unto salvation;³
 3 seeing⁴ you have tasted the goodness⁵ of the Lord;
 4 coming to whom, *the* living stone, by men disap-
 5 proved, but by God chosen and honoured, even you⁶
 as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy
 priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices well-pleasing
 6 to God, by Jesus Christ; according to what is
 contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Sion,

¹ *αἰῶνς* is the preferable reading.

² *Rationale sine dolo lac.*—VULGATE. That reasonable milk that is without corruption.—COVERDALE; MATTHEWS. The milk not of the body, but of the soul, which is without deceit.—CRANMER. The reasonable milk of the word, which is without deceit.—BISHOPS' BIBLE. The rational pure milk.—HAMMOND. Le lait spirituel, et tout pur.—MONS VERSION. *λογικόν*, i. q. *πνευματικόν*. v. 5.—VATER. "Illis temporibus rex Messias apparebit synagogæ Israeliticæ ad quem Israelitæ sic dicent: veni, esto frater noster, et proficiscamur Hierosolyma et sugemus tecum gustum legis, quemadmodum infans ubera matris suæ sugit."—TARGUM in Cant. viii. 1. Apud WETSTEIN.

³ *Εἰς σωτηρίαν* is found in a number of the most ancient Codd., and is admitted into the text by the most distinguished critical editors of the New Testament.

⁴ *Quia.*—CARPZOV. *Et.*—LACHMANN.

⁵ Ps. xxxiv. 8.

⁶ *Parietes spirituales quia homines pii sunt præcipuum templum.*—R. ALSCHERCH in Hag. ii. 10. Ap. WETSTEIN.

a corner stone, chosen, honoured ; and he that
 7 believeth on him shall not be ashamed." To you
 then who believe there is honour,¹ but to them who
 disbelieve *there is dishonour* ; the stone which the
 builders disallowed, has become the principal corner
 8 stone, and a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence,
on which they who believe not the word stumble, to
 9 which also they were appointed. But you *are* a
 chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a
 people for a peculiar possession *to God*, that you may
 proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you
 10 out of darkness into his marvellous light ; who once
 were not a people, but now are the people of God ;
 who once were not the objects of *his* mercy, but now
 are the objects of *his* mercy.

11 Beloved, I exhort you, as foreigners and sojourners,
 to keep yourselves from fleshly lusts, which war
 12 against the soul, conducting yourselves honourably
 among the heathen, that with regard to that in which
 they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may, from
 your good works,² having observed them, glorify
 13 God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves
 therefore, from a regard to the Lord, to every insti-
 tution of man,³ for the punishment of evil-doers, and
 the praise of those who do well ; whether it be king
 14 as supreme, or governors as commissioned by him ;
 15 for thus is it the will of God, that doing well you
 16 muzzle the ignorance of foolish men. As free men,

¹ Vobis igitur honor credentibus.—VULGATE.

² Ex bonis operibus vos considerantes.—VULGATE. May revering *you*
 (i.e., from), by your good works.—HAMMOND.

³ Humanæ creaturæ.—VULGATE. Humanæ ordinationi.—BEZA. Crea-
 ture of man.—WICLIF. Humane creature.—RHEMISTS ; HAMMOND.

yet not using your liberty as a cloak¹ of wickedness,
 17 but as the servants of God, honour all men, love the
 brotherhood, fear God, honour the King.²

18 Servants, submit yourselves, with all reverence, to
 your masters, not only to the kind and gentle, but
 19 also to the perverse;³ for this is well-pleasing, if any
 one who suffers unjustly, from religious principle
 20 endure his grievances patiently; for what credit is
 it if, when you commit a fault, and are chastised,
 you endure patiently? but if suffering while acting
 properly, you patiently endure, this is well-pleasing
 21 to God. For to this were you called; because even
 Christ suffered on our account, leaving us footprints⁴
 22 that we should follow in his steps, who committed
 no fault, and in whose mouth no deceit was found;
 23 who, being reviled, did not revile in return, suffer-
 ing did not threaten, but committed himself⁵ to the
 24 righteous judge; who himself, in his own body,
 bore our sins to the cross,⁶ that we dying by sins
 might live by righteousness: by whose weals⁷ you
 25 are healed; for you were as straying sheep, but you
 have now returned to the shepherd, and overseer⁸ of
 your souls.

¹ A covering of, a pretext for. Use it neither for concealing nor for excusing wickedness.

² The Roman emperor is termed βασιλεύς by the Greek writers. POLYGENI Strag. p. 1; HEROD. i. 3. The usage of the Jews appears from John xix. 15; Acts xvii. 7.

³ Cross, ill-conditioned, morose, wayward. Tyrants.—WICLIIF.

⁴ WAKEFIELD. 1 John ii. 6.

⁵ Resigned himself.—SYMONDS.

⁶ Lit. Stake, timber. Ἐπί. ROBINSON in verb. iii. 6. α and β.

⁷ Μύλων non est vulnus sed vibex, sive vestigium verberum aut flagellorum, πληγή μάστιγος ποιεῖ μύλωνας. Ecclus. xxviii. 17.—RAPHELIUS.

⁸ Curatorem.—BEZA; CASTALIO.

III. 1 Likewise, you wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands ; that if some of them are disbelievers in the doctrine, they may, without the doctrine,¹ be
 2 won over by contemplating your pious, chaste behaviour. Let your adorning not be the outward
 3 adorning of plaited hair, or of golden ornaments, or
 4 of curious dress ; but let the hidden man of the heart *be adorned* with the imperishable *ornament* of that meek and quiet spirit, which, in the estimation
 5 of God, is of great value.² For even thus, of old, the holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves, submitting themselves to their own husbands
 6 (as Sarah, whose children you are, obeyed Abraham, calling him lord³), doing what is good, and alarmed by no terrors.

7 Likewise, you husbands, dwell with your wives with a wise consideration of the greater weakness of the female frame ; giving them honour as also fellow-heirs of the gracious gift of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

8 Finally, be all of one mind and one heart,⁴ love
 9 as brethren. Be compassionate, be courteous. Do not render injury for injury, or railing for railing ; but, on the contrary, bless, knowing that you are

¹ As the article is wanting, *α. λ.* may not refer to *τ. λ.*, but may mean without discourse or discussion.

² Much set by.—COVERDALE ; GENEVA ; MATTHEWS.

³ CARPZOV ; WAKEFIELD. Gal. iv. 31 ; Gen. xii. 13, 15, xx. 2, xxvi. 7 ; Prov. iii. 25. *'Αγαποῦσαί* non cum vocabulo *τίνα* construendum, sed ex v. 5, *αἱ γυναῖκες* huic referendum est.—SCHOETGEN.

⁴ Be united in judgment and affection. Unanimes, compatiētes.—VULGATE. Unanimes, eodem modo affecti.—CASTALIO. Omnes eodem animo, eodem affectu.—CARPZOV.

10 called to this, that you may obtain a blessing: "For
 as to him, who wishes to enjoy life¹ and to see good
 days, let him restrain his tongue from mischief, and
 11 his lips from speaking deceit; let him depart from
 mischief and do good, let him seek peace and pursue
 12 it; for the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,
 and his ears towards their prayer; but the face of
 13 the Lord is against² evil-doers." And who shall
 harm³ you if you are imitators of Him who is good?⁴
 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you
 are blessed. Be not then afraid of their terror,
 15 neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in
 your hearts. And be always ready to vindicate, with
 meekness and reverence, your hope to every one who
 16 asks of you an account of it, maintaining a good
 conscience, in order that in the thing regarding
 which they speak against you as evil-doers, those who
 slander your good Christian behaviour may be put to
 17 shame. For it is better that you should suffer, if so be
 the will of God, doing good rather than doing evil.⁵

18 For, even Christ, once on account of sins, suffered,
 the righteous in the room of the unrighteous, that
 he might bring us to God; having become, dead,
 with respect to the flesh, but, quickened, with respect
 19 to the Spirit, whereby he went and preached even
 20 to the spirits in prison, who were in former times
 disbelieving, when the patience of God continued

¹ BENSON. The opposite of ἀγαπᾶν ζῶν is μισεῖν ζῶν. Ecc. ii. 17.
 Desireth to live.—SYMONDS.

² Ἐπ', on.—WICLIF. Beholdeth.—COVERDALE; MATTHEWS. Upon.—
 GENEVA; RHEMISTS. Mali huic non latent.—CAMERARIUS.

³ Hurt.—SYMONDS.

⁴ WYNNE.

⁵ Melius enim est ut bene agentes, si ita velit Dei voluntas, aliquid
 patiamini, quam male agentes.—BEZA.

- waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which a few—that is, eight—souls were
 21 saved by water, which also now—the antitype baptism—saves us, not as the removal of the filth of the flesh,¹ but as the profession of a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
 22 who is at the right hand of God, having passed into heaven, angels and authorities and powers having been subjected to him.

IV. 1 Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do you even arm yourselves with this same thought² —‘that he who hath suffered in the flesh hath been
 2 made to rest from sin,’—in order to the living the remainder of the time in the flesh, not according to the lusts of men, but according to the will of God ;
 3 for the time that is past is enough for us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, having walked in impurities, in lusts, in intoxication, in revels, in
 4 carousings, and lawless idolatrous rites ; wherein they think it strange that you run not with them, into the same mire of profligacy, speaking evil of
 5 you ; these³ shall render an account to Him who is
 6 in readiness⁴ to judge⁵ the living and the dead ; for, for this purpose also was the gospel preached to the dead, that as to man they might be judged in the flesh, but as to God might live in the Spirit.

¹ Baptismus non ei rei servit, cui balnea sufficiunt.—DEYLINGIUS.

² Cogitatione.—VULGATE. Armez-vous de cette pensée que, etc.—MONS VERSION.

³ ROBINSON : ἑ, ἡ, ἑ, 2. a. β. And thei schulen give resoun to hym.—WICLIF.

⁴ 2 Cor. x. 6. ἔχουσιν ἰσχύς.

⁵ Inflict righteous judgment on.

- 7 Now the end of all things is at hand ;¹ be, therefore, prudent and watchful with regard to prayers.
- 8 But, above all things, have a fervent love of each other ; for this love will cover a multitude of faults.
- 9, 10 Be hospitable to each other without grudgings ; as good stewards of the manifold kindness of God, let every one employ the gift he has received for mutual
- 11 service (if any one speak as oracles of God,² if any one minister as of the ability God has bestowed³), that in all things God may be glorified, through Jesus Christ, whose is the⁴ glory and the power for ever and ever, Amen.
- 12 Beloved, be not surprised at the scorching⁵ among you which is coming for your trial, as at some strange
- 13 thing happening to you ; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers in the sufferings of Christ, that you may also rejoice with exultation at the revelation
- 14 of his glory. If you suffer reproach in Christ's name, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of power,⁶ even the *spirit* of God, resteth on you ; with regard to them there is reproach, but with regard to
- 15 you there is glory.⁷ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as an inter-

¹ James v. 8, 9.

² *ὡς veritatis*. What are, indeed, divine oracles—speaking as the *ἱκανοὶς* of God.

³ Of the ability which God has really given him as a divinely qualified minister.

⁴ Cui est.—VULGATE.

⁵ Prov. xxvii. 21, LXX. ; 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14 ; Apoc. xviii. 19.

⁶ *Δυνάμεις* is introduced into the text by GRIESBACH, MATTHÆI, and LACHMANN.

⁷ They will reproach, but you will be honoured. This clause is of doubtful authority. GRIESBACH and LACHMANN omit it.

16 meddler;¹ but if *any* suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this
 17 account.² For it is the time of the commencement of the judgment from the house of God; and if the beginning be from us, what will be the issue³ with
 18 those who disbelieve the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be delivered, where shall the
 19 ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let even⁴ those who suffer, according to the will of God, in well-doing commit their souls to *Him*, who is⁵ a faithful Creator.

V. 1 To the elders among you, I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a sharer in the glory that is about to be revealed, give this
 2 exhortation. Act as shepherds to the flock of God that is among you,⁶ superintending them, not reluctantly, but willingly; not from a sordid love of
 3 gain, but from a spirit of zeal; neither lording it over the allotted portions,⁷ but being patterns for
 4 the flock;⁸ and when the chief shepherd⁹ appears,

¹ Alienorum appetitor.—VULGATE. Rerum ad se non pertinentium curiosus inspector.—ERASM. SCHMID.

² 2 Cor. iii. 10, ix. 3.

³ Finis judicii.—ERAS. SCHMID.

⁴ Καί, *etiam*, concessivé cum participio, idem quod *εἰ καὶ* et *σι* cum verbo : *εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε*, chap. iii. 14. Non debemus ex passione diffidentiam capere.—BENGEL.

⁵ ὁ ἀληθής.—HESYCHIUS. Revera, vere.—SCHLEUSNER. Answering to the Heb. *Caph veritatis*. Neh. vii. 2; Hos. v. 10, LXX; John i. 14.

⁶ As much as lieth in you.—CRANMER.

⁷ The clergy.—WICLIF; RHEMISTS. The parishes.—COVERDALE; MATTHEWS; CRANMER. Your charges.—HAMMOND.

⁸ THEOPHYLACT and ŒCUMENIUS consider καὶ as an αἰτιολογικὸς σύνδεσμος.

⁹ Prince of shepherds.—WICLIF. Prince of pastors.—RHEMISTS.

- 5 you shall receive the unfading crown of glory. In like manner, you juniors, submit yourselves to the elders,¹ and all of you being subject to each other, be girdled with humility;² for God opposes the haughty, but to the humble he shows favour.
- 6 Humble yourselves, then, under the mighty hand
7 of God, that he may exalt you in due season :³ casting all your anxiety on Him, for he cares for you.
- 8 Be sober, be wakeful ; your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, is going about seeking whom he
9 may devour ; him resist, standing fast in the faith,⁴ knowing that the same kinds of suffering are accomplished in your brotherhood while in the world.
- 10 But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, shall himself⁵ make you perfect, stablish,
11 strengthen, settle you ;⁶ His is⁷ the glory and the power, for ever and ever. Amen.
- 12 By Silvanus, to you a faithful brother, as I judge,

¹ The Syriac version has "your elders," which shows us how its author understood *παιδρες*.

² Put on humility as your badge.—HAMMOND.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 15 ; 2 Cor. vi. 2. Whether here or hereafter, certainly at a seasonable time.—STEIGER.

⁴ *Erga diffidentes robur habet, erga fideles imbellis est.*—BULLINGER.

⁵ Phil. i. 6.

⁶ The elder English versions—COVERDALE, MATTHEWS, and CRANMER—render this in the future ; and the reading on which this rendering rests, that of the Vulgate, is recognised by GRIESBACH, SCHOLZ, and LACHMANN as genuine. *Digna Petro oratio : confirmat suos fratres.*—BENGEL.

⁷ If, as is generally admitted, the verbs in the previous verse be in the future, *is* seems a more suitable supplement than *be*.

I have briefly written, exhorting *you*, and testifying
to you that this is the true grace of God, with regard
13 to which do you stand.¹ *The church*² in Babylon,
chosen as you are, saluteth you ; also Marcus, my
14 son. Salute each other with a kiss of love. Peace
be with you all who are in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

¹ Ἐστῆτε.—LACHMANN. See the authorities in GRIESBACH and SCHOLZ.

² Literally *she*, that is, either ἐκκλησία or διακονία.

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

"I have just finished, in my daily reading, the First Epistle of St Peter; and I cannot help thinking that it is an invaluable part of the Christian volume. The internal evidence which it affords in support of the Christian verity in general, is as decisive as the principles which it lays down, and the spirit which it breathes, are a full and perfect exemplification, as well as epitome, of the sum and substance of practical Christianity. This latter character of it no right-hearted Christian can overlook; but its value as matter of evidence may not be adverted to even by devout readers. Yet, to consider it in this light may make it a source of the deepest edification."—ALEX. KNOX.

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE AUTHOR—THE ADDRESS—AND THE SALUTATION.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."—1 PET. i. 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION.



THE Holy Scriptures—the inspired record of the revealed will of God—are not occupied with a systematic view of religious and moral truth and duty, but consist of a great variety of separate treatises, some of them historical, others didactic, others prophetic, most of them written in prose, though some of them in verse, composed at irregular intervals during a period of fifteen hundred years, and generally having a peculiar reference to the circumstances of those to whom they were originally addressed. The miscellaneous and occasional character thus impressed on the sacred writings, like everything else about them, bears in it indications of their divine origin. It prevents the appearance of human

art or contrivance; proves that the harmony which prevails in them could not be the result of a preconcerted plan on the part of the writers; and leads us to inquire for a reason—which can only be found in the fact that they were given by the inspiration of Him who is “the only wise God”—why writings, so plainly occasional in their origin, should notwithstanding be so well fitted to serve the purpose of a universal and permanent rule of religious belief and moral conduct.

A considerable part of the second volume of the inspired writings—the CHRISTIAN Scriptures—consists of letters, addressed by apostles of Christ, some of them to individual Christians, most of them to bodies of Christians resident in particular cities or districts. These epistles form one of the most valuable portions of the Book of God. They embody in them much evidence, in a peculiarly satisfactory form, of the truth of the gospel history, and of the divine origin of Christianity; they contain in them the full development of the Christian doctrine, given by men on whom, according to His promise, the exalted Redeemer had conferred the Holy Spirit, “to guide them into all the truth;” they give us a striking exhibition of the living spirit of Christianity, and its influence on the formation of character, both in the writers of the epistles and in those to whom they are addressed; they present us with authentic information in reference to the constitution, government, and worship of the primitive Church; and they furnish, in the most useful and impressive form, a complete code of Christian morals.

Among these apostolical letters, the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter has always held a high place in the estimation of the Church. Their opinion cannot be better expressed than in the words of the heavenly Leighton: “This excellent epistle, full of evangelical doctrine and

apostolical authority, is a brief and yet very clear summary, both of the consolations and instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a Christian in his journey to heaven; elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptation and afflictions from without. The heads of doctrine contained in it are many; but the main that are most insisted on, are these three—Faith, Obedience, and Patience,—to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering.”¹

The authenticity and genuineness of the epistle, and its apostolic origin and consequent divine inspiration, rest on the most satisfactory evidence. It is alluded to in the second epistle bearing Peter's name; the great antiquity of which is undoubted, though its canonical authority has been questioned. It is plainly referred to by the earliest Christian writers, as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenæus; and Eusebius ranks it among the books universally admitted to belong to the sacred canon. The doubts which have been thrown out by certain German critics in later times have obviously originated in the very wantonness of scepticism, and but little deserve the grave discussion and elaborate refutation which they have received from sounder scholars.

Like the letters of Paul, this composition holds a middle place between the treatise or discourse and the familiar epistle. It is not, like the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, principally occupied with one

¹ *Epistolam profecto dignam apostolorum principe, plenam auctoritatis ac majestatis apostolicæ, verbis parcam, sententiis differtam.*—ERASMUS. *Habet hæc epistola τὸ ἐφεδρὶον conveniens ingenio principis apostolorum.*—GROTIUS. *Mirabilis est gravitas et alacritas Petrini sermonis, suavissime retinens lectorem.*—BENGEL.

great doctrinal theme. It more resembles the minor Pauline epistles, with this difference, that the doctrinal and the practical statements are more commingled. There is comparatively little discussion or argument in it. It is, as the author himself describes it (ch. v. 12), a testimony and an exhortation.¹

The natural warmth of the author's disposition² gives to the style a character of energy approaching to vehemence; and there is to be found just such a familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures, manifesting itself not only in direct quotations, but in numerous natural allusions, which have all the appearance of having been unconscious, as might be expected in the composition of a pious, though, when compared with Paul, an unlettered Jew.³

This epistle is distinguished for great tenderness of manner, and for bringing forward prominently the most consolatory parts of the gospel. The apostle "wrote to those who were in affliction. He was himself an old man. He expected soon to be with the Saviour. He had nearly done with the conflicts and toils of life. It was natural that he should direct his eye onward and upward, and dwell on those things in the gospel which were adapted to support and comfort the soul. There is, therefore, scarcely any part of the New Testament where the ripe and mellow Christian will find more that is adapted to his matured feelings, or to which he will more naturally turn.

"There is great compactness of thought and terseness of expression in this epistle. It seems to be composed of a succession of texts, each one fitted to constitute the subject of a discourse. There is more that a pastor would like to preach on in a course of expository lectures, and less that

¹ Παρακαλῶν καὶ ἑπιμαρτυρῶν.

² Chrysostom terms him ὁ πανταχοῦ θειμής.

³ See note A.

he would be disposed to pass over as not so well adapted to the purposes of religious instruction, than in almost any other book of the New Testament. There is almost nothing that is of merely local or temporary interest. There are no discussions about points pertaining to Jewish customs, such as we meet with in (most of) Paul's epistles. There is little that pertains particularly to one city or country. Almost all is of universal applicability to Christians, and may be read with as much interest and profit now by us, as by those to whom the epistle was addressed."¹

There are plain traces in the epistle of an intimate acquaintance with the modes of thought and expression characteristic of the writings of Paul, which, even without the references in the second epistle (ch. iii. 14, 15), would have led to the conclusion that the writer had read that apostle's epistles.² Peter's mode of writing is much less than Paul's that of a scholar; but he has much of the same natural ease of diction, tendency to digression, and use of figurative language.

This epistle holds an intermediate place between those of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and that of James the Apostle of the Circumcision. It resembles both in a greater degree than they resemble each other.³

With respect to the time when this epistle was written, we have not the means of arriving at absolute certainty. The probability seems to be, that its true date is about A.D. 65, the eleventh year of Nero's reign, two or three years before the apostle's martyrdom, which is generally supposed to have taken place A.D. 67.⁴

It may be proper here to say a word as to the meaning of the epithet General or Catholic, which, since the fourth

¹ Barnes.

² See note B.

³ See note C.

⁴ Hug's Introduction, sec. clxiii.; Steiger's Exposition, i. 33; Kitto's Cyclopædia *sub voce*; Michaelis' Introduction, iv. 325.

century, has been given to this epistle, as well as to the second epistle of Peter, and the epistles of James, John, and Jude. This is not a question of vital importance (for the appellation has no claim to divine authority); and it is well that it is so, for there seems no means of determining it with anything like certainty. The term appears originally to have meant an epistle directed not to one church, but to all, or at any rate to many churches,—a description which belongs to five of the seven epistles so distinguished; the other two being addressed to individuals. In the time of Eusebius, with this sense seems to have been connected the somewhat cognate one, of epistles publicly read in many, or all of the churches, on account of the excellence and usefulness of their contents; and, till the writings of the New Testament were collected into one volume, it appears to have been the technical name by which this collection of epistles was distinguished from the Pauline epistles.¹

The object of the apostle in this epistle is plainly to confirm the disciples in the faith, profession, and obedience of the gospel; by deepening their conviction that the source of happiness, and the foundation of the everlasting kingdom of God, were contained in that faith of the Redeemer which had been announced to them, and received by them into their hearts; that that doctrine was indeed the everlasting, unchangeable word of God, and that, therefore, they ought to aim at appropriating it with childlike simplicity, that so they might continually advance towards “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;” and to exhort them to maintain their steadfastness in the faith under all persecutions, and a corresponding course of conduct, by which they would “shine as lights in the world,” and

¹ Euseb. H. E. ii. 23; Noesselti *Opuscula*, fasc. ii.; Michaelis; Hug; Schott; De Wette.

refute the false accusations against Christianity and Christians.¹

It is my intention, "if the Lord will," to lay before you, at irregular intervals, a series of expository discourses on this "weighty and powerful" epistle; and the passage which I have read shall form the subject of the first of these discourses.

These verses contain the inscription and the salutation, according to the ordinary usage of the apostolical epistles; and naturally lead us to speak,—I. Of the writer of the epistle—"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ;" II. Of those to whom the epistle is addressed—"The elect strangers of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God, by a spiritual sanctification, to obedience and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and III. Of the benevolent wish which he expresses, or the solemn prayer which he presents for them—"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

I. OF THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE.

The writer of this epistle, whose original name was Simon, was a native of Bethsaida, at that time an inconsiderable village on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. He was bred to the occupation of a fisherman, which seems to have been the family profession; and at the time of his becoming acquainted with Jesus Christ, he was married, and had removed with his family to Capernaum. His brother Andrew, who was a disciple of John the Baptist, having heard his master pronounce Jesus whom he had lately baptized, "the Lamb of God," solicited an interview

¹ Neander.

with him, which ended in his conviction that he was indeed the great Deliverer, concerning whom the ancient prophets had uttered so many glorious predictions, and whose appearance, without delay, was at this period generally expected by the Jews. He communicated the joyful intelligence to his brother Simon, whom he introduced to Jesus. He also appears to have become from that day a believer; and, in the exercise of that knowledge of the secrets of the heart and of futurity by which He was distinguished, Jesus, in reference to the dispositions he should discover and the services he should perform, surnamed him Cephas, or Petros—the one a Chaldæo-Syriac, the other a Greek word—both signifying a *stone* or *rock*.

For some time after this, these two brothers continued to follow their profession as fishermen. But one day Jesus, after having confirmed their faith by a miraculous draught of fishes, which he intimated was emblematical of the vast multitudes who, through their instrumentality, were to become his followers, required their constant attendance on him; and when he soon afterwards selected twelve of his disciples, whom he termed apostles, and entrusted with miraculous powers, we find Peter's name holding the first place in the list. He obviously from the beginning was "among the chief of the apostles,"¹ and occupied a high place, comparatively as well as really, in his Master's esteem and affection. Of this we have satisfactory evidence in his being, along with John and James, the sons of Zebedee, chosen to witness his Lord's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and his agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

None of the apostles was more firmly persuaded of the divinity of Jesus' mission, more affectionately attached to his person, or more zealously devoted to his cause. When

¹ Chrysostom says of him, ἱερευς ἦν τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ στίμα τῶν μαθητῶν καὶ ἡ κορυφὴ τοῦ χοροῦ.—In Joan. Hom. 88.

many of his disciples who had expected from the Messiah a worldly kingdom, became offended with a discourse in which he had intimated that the blessings he came to procure and bestow were of a heavenly kind, and "went back, and walked no more with him," Jesus turned to his little chosen band, and asked them the touching question, "Will ye also go away?" Peter exclaimed, "To whom can we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we know and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." On another occasion, when our Lord, having inquired of his disciples what were the opinions generally entertained of him by his countrymen, put the question to them, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter immediately replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." His warm attachment to his Lord was as strongly, though not so wisely, manifested, in his dissuading him from submitting to suffering and death; in his refusing to allow him to wash his feet; in his declaration that, though he should die with him, he would never deny him; in his singly drawing his sword against a numerous body of armed men in his defence; and in his persisting to follow him when the rest of the disciples had forsaken him and fled.

To teach Peter his own weakness, he was permitted to fall before the temptations to which he had rashly exposed himself. Thrice in the course of a very short period he denied, with execrations, that he knew *Him* for whom he had so lately, both by words and deeds, shown that he was then ready to lay down his life. The fact is recorded, not for Peter's shame, but for our instruction; and it proclaims, "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" "Be not high-minded, but fear;" "Without Christ ye can do nothing."

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,

'I never will deny my Lord ;'
But, 'Grant I never may.'"

When our Lord, in the midst of his sufferings, cast on his recreant disciple a look of wounded but unchanging affection, he "came to himself," and, stung to the heart at the thought of his base ingratitude, hastened into solitude, and "wept bitterly."

It is a striking proof of Jesus' peculiar affection to our apostle, that in the message he sent by the angel to his disciples by Mary Magdalene, to whom he first appeared after his resurrection, Peter is particularly mentioned: "Go tell the disciples, and Peter." This token of kindness was not lost on him. He ran immediately to the sepulchre, and went into it to ascertain that the body was indeed not there; and he had the high honour of being the first among the apostles who saw his risen Redeemer, though we have no particular account of the interview. Luke xxiv. 34.

Some time after the resurrection, our Lord gave Peter a most overwhelming proof of his regard, and afforded him an honourable opportunity of manifesting, in the presence of his brethren, his unabated love for his Master, and his increased distrust of himself. It would be injustice to tell the story in other words than those of the inspired historian, John xxi. 15-19. "So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou

knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

Peter was present with his brethren on that memorable day, when Jesus "led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Not one of them gazed with a more eager eye upward till the form of the Saviour vanished in the cloud of glory, or with a heart more full of solemn gladness returned to Jerusalem.

Immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter was honoured to open the gates of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, by preaching the first gospel sermon properly so called, and that sermon was blessed to the conversion of three thousand souls.

After having, along with John, performed a miracle of healing, he delivered an eloquent and convincing discourse, by means of which multitudes were induced to embrace the gospel; and when brought before the council, he showed how completely our Lord's promise had been performed, that he would give to his apostles "a spirit and a wisdom which all their adversaries would be unable to resist."

At his reproof Ananias and Sapphira, who had attempted to impose on the apostles, were struck with instantaneous death.

Many of the Samaritans having embraced Christianity in consequence of the preaching of Philip, Peter visited

them, and by the laying on of his hands they received the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. We find him afterwards at Lydda, healing Eneas, who had been eight years confined to his bed by palsy ; and at Joppa raising Tabitha from the dead.

He who had opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, was called on also, in the case of the centurion Cornelius and his family, to open the same gate to the Gentiles. In consequence of a divine mission, he preached to them the gospel ; and while he was preaching it, "the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace," and shed forth on them abundantly the Holy Ghost.

On his return to Jerusalem, Herod Agrippa cast him into prison with the intention of putting him to death by public execution ; but he was miraculously delivered by an angel, and restored to liberty.

At the meeting of what is ordinarily termed the council or synod of Jerusalem, Peter strongly asserted the freedom of believing Gentiles from all obligation to observe the law of Moses, and urged the circumstances of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, as an irrefragable proof of the doctrine which he taught on that subject. Some time after this, being at Antioch, he acted on this liberal principle, by maintaining an unrestricted freedom of intercourse with the converted Gentiles, till a fear of offending some Jewish Christians, zealous for the law, induced him, from a mistaken notion of expediency, to "withdraw himself." This inconsistent, rather than unprincipled, conduct drew on him the honest reproof of the Apostle Paul, who in a very convincing manner showed that his fellow-apostle was now contradicting by action what he had asserted in words, and building up again what he had destroyed.

We have no further account of the Apostle Peter in the New Testament. A careful attention to the hints met with

in authentic church history, has led the best-informed writers to believe that, having returned to Judea from Antioch, he remained at Jerusalem for some years, and that he then returned into Syria, and from thence visited those provinces mentioned in the inscription of this epistle, and formed an acquaintance with those churches for whose edification his two epistles were intended. On leaving these parts, he probably went into the Parthian empire, where he appears to have been labouring when this epistle was written.

The remaining history of the apostle is involved in obscurity. It is not impossible that he went to Rome after Paul had left it for the last time; and there, now an old man, sealed his testimony with his blood, and obtained the crown of martyrdom, being put to death by the order of the inhuman Nero. It is storied that he was crucified with his head downward,—himself observing with characteristic affection and humility, “that he was unworthy of the honour of being crucified in the same way as his Master was.”¹ This observation, savouring so much more of the morbid piety of what is called ancient Christianity than of simple apostolic humility, goes far to discredit the whole story. It seems certain, however, that he was crucified, and that thus was the enigmatic prophecy of our Lord explained by its fulfilment, in which he signified by what death Peter should glorify God: John xxi. 18, 19, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another

¹ Clem. Rom. Ep. 1 ad Corinth. c. v.; Euseb. H. E. ii. 25, iii. 1; Chron. ad an. xiv. Neronis; Lactant. de mort. persecut. c. ii., Inst. div. iv. 21. From 1 Cor. ix. 5 it would appear that he was not long permanently resident in any place, but spent his time in missionary work, *περιάγων*, “leading about” with him his wife.

shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."¹

Such is a short outline of the more important facts known in reference to the venerable writer of this epistle.²

Peter describes himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." The word apostle signifies a person sent by another, a messenger. The term is, in the New Testament, generally employed as the descriptive appellation of a comparatively small class of men, to whom Jesus Christ entrusted the organization of his Church, and the dissemination of his religion among mankind. At an early period of his ministry "he ordained twelve" of his disciples, "that they should be with him." These he named apostles. Some time afterwards, "he gave to them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease;" and "he sent them to preach the kingdom of God."³ To them he gave "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and constituted them princes over the spiritual Israel, that people whom God was to take "from among" the Jews and "the Gentiles for his name."⁴ Previously to his death he promised them the Holy Spirit, to fit them to be the founders and

¹ "It is related by Ambrose, that Peter, shortly before his death, overpowered by the love of life, made his escape out of prison, but was arrested and confounded in his flight by the appearance of the Saviour bearing his cross. To the recreant's question, 'Lord, whither goest thou?'—*Domine quo vadis*—the Lord replied, 'To Rome to be crucified.' Peter hastily returned and met his death with joy. This tradition still lives in the mouths of the people of Rome, and is embodied in the name of a church edifice beyond the Sebastian gate."—SCHOTT. The story rests on no historical evidence, but, as the Italians say, "Se non é vero, é ben trovato,"—"If not a true, it is a well-contrived tale."

² For the authorities of the above statement, see note D.

³ Mark iii. 14; Matt. x. 1-5; Mark vi. 7; Luke vi. 13, ix. 1.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18, xix. 28; Luke xxii. 30.

governors of the Christian Church.¹ After his resurrection he solemnly confirmed their call, saying, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you;"² and gave them a commission to "preach the gospel to every creature."³ After his ascension, he, on the day of Pentecost, communicated to them those supernatural gifts which were necessary to the performance of the high functions he had commissioned them to discharge; and in the exercise of these gifts, they, in the gospel history, and in their epistles, with the Apocalypse, gave a complete view of the will of their Master, in reference to that new order of things of which he was the author. They "had the mind of Christ." They spoke "the wisdom of God in a mystery." That mystery "God revealed to them by his Spirit," and they spoke it "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." They were "ambassadors for Christ," and besought men "in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." They authoritatively taught the doctrine and law of the Lord; they organized churches, and required them to "keep the traditions," that is, the doctrines and ordinances, "delivered to them."⁴

The characteristic features of the apostles as official men were, that they had seen the Lord, and been eye and ear witnesses of what they testified to the world;⁵ that they had been called and chosen *immediately* by Christ;⁶ that they were infallibly inspired to declare his doctrine and laws;⁷ that they possessed the power of working miracles;⁸ and that

¹ John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, 27, xvi. 7-15.

² Καθὼς ἀπέστειλάς με ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ σίμωσεν ὑμᾶς.

³ John xx. 21-23; Matt. xviii. 18-20.

⁴ Acts ii.; 1 Cor. ii. 16, ii. 7, 10, 13; 2 Cor. v. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 2.

⁵ John xv. 27; Acts i. 21, 22; 1 Cor. xv. 8, ix. 1; Acts xxii. 14, 15.

⁶ Luke vi. 13; Gal. i. 1.

⁷ John xvi. 13; 1 Cor. ii. 10; Gal. i. 11, 12; John xiv. 26.

⁸ Mark xvi. 20; Acts ii. 43; 1 Cor. xii. 8-11; 2 Cor. xii. 12.

their commission was, strictly speaking, catholic, extending to the whole Church—to the whole world.¹

It must be obvious, from this scriptural account of the apostolical office, that the apostles had—could have, in the strict sense of the term—no successors. Their qualifications were supernatural, and their work once performed, remains in the infallible record of the New Testament for the advantage of the Church and the world in all future ages. They are the only authoritative teachers of Christian doctrine and law. All official men in Christian churches can legitimately claim no higher place than that of expounders of the doctrines, and administrators of the laws, found in their writings. Few things have been more injurious to the cause of Christianity, than the assumption, on the part of ordinary office-bearers in the Church, of the peculiar prerogatives of “the holy apostles of our Lord Jesus.” Much that is said of the latter is not at all applicable to the former, and much that admits of being thus applied, can be so, in accordance with truth, only in a very secondary and extenuated sense.²

To this, the highest and holiest office ever held by mere man, the author of this epistle had been called by his Master; and it appears that, in the exercise of its important functions, his labours were chiefly, though not exclusively, devoted to his “brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.”³ Though there is no ground for the assertion, that Peter was the Prince of the Apostles, or had even a permanent presidency among them, yet there can be no doubt he stood very high in the estimation of his brethren,—was among those who “seemed to be pillars,”—“the very chiefest apostles.”⁴

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 28; Acts xvi. 4; 1 Cor. v. 3-6; 2 Cor. x. 8, xiii. 10.

² *Vide* Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, Lect. v.; Kitto's Cyclopædia of Bib. Lit. vol. i. p. 179, etc.

³ Gal. ii. 8, 9.

⁴ Gal. ii. 9; 2 Cor. xi. 5.

II. OF THOSE TO WHOM THE EPISTLE IS ADDRESSED.

The persons to whom the epistle is addressed, come next to be considered. They are described first, generally, as "elect," or chosen; and then, particularly, both as to their external circumstances and to their spiritual state and character. With regard to the former, they are "the strangers scattered abroad, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." With regard to the latter, they are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

It has been, and is, a question among expositors, who are the persons to whom this epistle is addressed. It is plainly addressed to Christians, and to Christians resident in the countries specified. But, according to one class of interpreters, it is addressed to the Jewish converts resident in these regions; by another class, it is considered as addressed to the Gentile converts resident there; by a third class, it is considered as addressed to those who are called "proselytes of the gate,"—persons by birth Gentiles, but who had embraced Judaism, and had afterwards been converted to Christianity.

We apprehend that the true view of the matter is, that the epistle was addressed to the Christian converts generally, whether Jews or Gentiles, residing in the countries mentioned. As a majority of these were Jews, and as Peter was not only a Jew, but the Apostle of the Circumcision, it is not wonderful that the circumstances and duties of the persons addressed are spoken of, so frequently, I had almost said so uniformly, in language referring to the peculiarities of the Jewish economy.¹

¹ *Vide* Michaelis' Introduction, by Marsh, vol. iv. 315-325; Schott, *Isaïe* in lib. N. F. Sac. p. 403. For a particular account of the countries

These persons are described, first, generally, as "elect," or chosen. It appears to me a doctrine not only very plainly revealed in Scripture, but necessarily resulting from the principles of natural religion, that all who enjoy the blessings of Christianity, the saving benefits of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life, do so in consequence of the sovereign free love of God, which, like himself, is necessarily eternal; or, in other words, were elected from unbeginning ages to the happiness bestowed on them. This doctrine is taught with peculiar plainness in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, 3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

At the same time, I apprehend, the word "elect" here, and in a number of other places in the New Testament, does not refer directly to what has been termed the electing decree,¹ but to the manifestation of it in the actually *selecting* certain individuals from amidst a world lying in wickedness, that they may be set apart to God, and become his peculiar

here referred to, *vide* Steiger, Exp. of the First Ep. of Peter, Introd. sec. 6, vol. i. pp. 14-19. "To maintain, indeed, that the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were exclusively Jews of the dispersion, is hardly consistent with ch. ii. 10 and ch. iv. 3. But when we consider the close intermixture of the Jewish settlers with the native inhabitants of the Gentile countries, their great numbers and influence in these very countries, the almost complete identification with them implied in Gal. iv. 8, it is natural to suppose, especially in a letter from the great Apostle of the Circumcision, that the nucleus, the mainspring of those Asiatic churches was not Gentile, but Jewish."—STANLEY *on the Apostolic Age*, p. 231.

¹ Ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις.—Rom. ix. 11.

people. The remark of Leighton appears to me very judicious: "Election here means the selecting them out of the world and joining them to the fellowship of the people of God." This is the election which our Lord speaks of when he says, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen"¹—selected—"you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."² And the Apostle Paul plainly speaks of the election and the vocation of the Corinthians as the same thing. "Ye see your calling . . . for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."³ As Israel, as a nation, was selected to be a peculiar people to Jehovah, so true Christians are, as individuals, selected to be a part of God's spiritual "purchased inheritance," or peculiar people.

These selected or chosen persons are described, first, as to their external condition. They are represented as "strangers⁴ scattered abroad." The appellation is borrowed from the term generally given to Jews dwelling in Gentile lands.⁵ The situation of Christians while on earth does not resemble that of Israel dwelling in peace and security in Canaan, but that of Israelites sojourning among strangers and enemies. The selected people of God, while here below, are not gathered into one place, assembled together as citizens of the same city, children of the same family. They will be so by and by; but now they are "strangers,"

¹ See note E.

² John xv. 19.

³ 1 Cor. i. 26-29.

⁴ Παροικήμας. The word expresses two ideas: not natives of the country in which they are; not settled residents in that foreign country.

⁵ Ἡ διασπορά.—John vii. 35.

"pilgrims," "sojourners," being a small minority among a people whose habits of thought and feeling, whose pursuits and whose pleasures, are altogether alien from theirs; and "scattered" strangers, as being not merely far from home, but often far from each other, and but imperfectly enjoying the comfort and support arising from intimate communion with persons of kindred sentiments and affections. Such was the external state of the Christians to whom this epistle was addressed; such is the external state of true Christians still.

The particular description of the spiritual state of these selected and dispersed strangers now requires our attention. They are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" they are "elect through sanctification of the spirit;" they are "elect to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

They are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God."¹ Here is the doctrine of election very plainly stated. They were selected from the rest of mankind, not because they were better than others. They were selected in accordance with the sovereign will of Him "to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the world." They are the "called," or chosen, "according to his purpose;" and the purpose in reference to his choice of them stands, "not of works, but of him that calleth." No cause can be assigned for them being selected rather than others, but the sovereign free love of God. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he hath compassion on whom he will have compassion." When the Lord set his love on Israel, and chose them to be his peculiar people, the cause was not in them, but in himself; it was just because he loved them—"because he had a delight in them to love them;" and it is equally true that the selection of certain

¹ See note F.

individuals to enjoy the better blessings of the better economy, can be traced by us to nothing but the sovereign kindness of Him who "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."¹

They are "elect through sanctification of the spirit." Sanctification means here, as usually in the New Testament, separation, setting apart; and sanctification of the spirit² means spiritual separation as opposed to external or bodily separation.³ When Israel was chosen to be God's peculiar people, in being separated from all nations, they were marked by a great variety of external distinctions. They lived in a country of their own, were distinguished by peculiar civil laws and customs, and were warned to abstain from all intimate intercourse of any kind with the surrounding nations. The peculiar people of God, under the new dispensation, are also separated from the rest of mankind; but their separation is of a spiritual kind. They are separated from them not civilly, but religiously—separated from them in their sentiments and affections. Spiritually they "come out from the world, and are separate;" but in reference to the affairs of this world, they are not a separate society.⁴

They are "elect, according to the divine foreknowledge, and by this spiritual separation, to obedience."⁵ The full expression is "the obedience of faith," or the obedience of the truth; and to obey the faith or the truth, is just to believe the gospel and live under its influence. That the New Testament writers use the word "obedience" simply, when they mean "the obedience of faith," is evident from the following passage in the Epistle to the Romans, ch. vi. 16, 17: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves

¹ Rom. ix. 11, 15; Deut. x. 15; Eph. i. 11.

² Ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος, not τοῦ Πνεύματος.

³ See note G.

⁴ See note H.

⁵ See note I.

servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." When Israel became the peculiar people of God, by his selecting them according to his sovereign good pleasure, and externally separating them to himself, it was that they might be subject to his laws. In like manner, when individuals are selected by God to form a part of his peculiar people under the better economy, according to his foreknowledge, and are spiritually separated and set apart, it is that they may obey its law—that they may believe the gospel, and give up their whole inner and outer man to be regulated by its influence; it is that, taught by "the grace of God, which brings salvation," they may "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."¹

Still further, they are "elect—to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." When Israel were chosen to be God's people, and externally set apart for this purpose, it was not only that they might be subject to his law, but that they might share in the effects of that law's expiatory offerings—that, being sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices by which that covenant was ratified, their ceremonial guilt might be pardoned, their ceremonial pollution removed, and that they might be fitted for external fellowship with Jehovah as their God and King.² When God, in accordance with his sovereign purpose of mercy, selects individuals,

¹ Tit. ii. 11-14.

² Ex. xxiv. 8.

and sets them spiritually apart for his people, it is that, through the faith of the gospel, they may be personally interested in the blessings procured by the death of Jesus Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men: that their sins may be forgiven them, that the jealousies of guilt may be removed, that they may be enabled and disposed with a true heart to approach to God, as "rich in mercy, ready to forgive," "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" and in spiritual fellowship with him, with minds conformed to his mind, and wills conformed to his will, serve him with their souls and bodies, which are his, not only because they are made by him, but because they have been "redeemed" to him, "not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by precious blood, the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."¹

Such is the apostle's description of the spiritual state, character, and circumstances of those whom he addresses. They are selected by God according to his own sovereign purpose, and spiritually set apart for him, that, believing the gospel, they may enjoy all the blissful results of the death of Jesus Christ the just one, in the room of the unjust.²

III. THE SALUTATION OF THE EPISTLE.

The benevolent wish or solemn prayer which the apostle presents for those to whom he writes, now calls for our consideration: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."³

"Grace" is free favour, sovereign kindness,—the principle in the divine mind from which all blessings to sinful

¹ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

² See note K.

³ The origin of this form of salutation is likely to be found Num. vi. 24-26.

men flow. The word is often used as a general name for those blessings which flow from this sovereign kindness. Grace here plainly is the grace of God. The prayer, "Grace be multiplied unto you," implied that they were already objects of the grace of God, and is equivalent to—'God loves you, and has given you proofs of his love. Had he not loved you, would he have selected you—would he have spiritually set you apart for himself—would he have brought you to the obedience of the truth—would he have sprinkled you with the blood of Jesus? May you have continued, increasing, and multiplied proofs that God loves you, in the continuance, and increase, and multiplication of all heavenly and spiritual blessings!'

"Peace" is not so much a different thing from "grace," as a different view of the same thing. We call spiritual blessings "grace," as springing from God's sovereign kindness. We call them "peace," as calculated to tranquillize our minds and make us happy. The prayer, "Peace be multiplied to you," is equivalent to—'You already enjoy peace and happiness.' For "they who believe, do enter into rest." 'May your happiness be continued—may it increase!' May "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!"

Having thus, very cursorily, considered the interesting topics suggested by this passage of Scripture, let us, my brethren, endeavour to turn them to practical account. A great majority of us are professors of Christianity. Does the description given in the text suit us? Have we any satisfactory evidence that we have been selected by God, called by his grace, spiritually separated to his service,—that we have believed the truth, and are enjoying the happy consequence of the belief of the truth, in having the "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience" by the blood of Christ?

Do we feel that *here* we are "strangers of the dispersion," and are waiting for "the gathering together," at the period when all the citizens of heaven shall be assembled in the New Jerusalem, where all the children of God shall be brought home to their Father's house? If this is the case with you, brethren, then let your conduct correspond with your privileges; and "may grace and peace be multiplied to you, and to all the Israel of God."

If it be otherwise, we call on you now to obey the truth, and, through the obedience of the truth, to submit your hearts and consciences to the pacifying and purifying influence of the atoning blood of Jesus. We know nothing about the purpose of God in reference to individuals till that purpose is manifested in its execution; but we do know the purpose of God in reference to lost men generally, and we proclaim it as the appointed means of gathering from among men the elect of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not have been justified by the law of Moses."¹

NOTE A. p. 4.

The following are the principal references to the Old Testament in the epistle:—Ch. i. 16: Lev. xi. 44. Ch. i. 24, 25: Isa. xl. 6, etc.—Ch. ii. 3: Ps. xxxiv. 9. Ch. ii. 4: Ps. cxviii. 16. Ch. ii. 6: Isa. xxviii. 16. Ch. ii. 7: Ps. cxviii. 22. Ch.

¹ John iii. 16, 17; Acts xiii. 38, 39.

ii. 9: Ex. xix. 5, 6; Isa. xliii. 20, 21. Ch. ii. 10: Hos. ii. 23. Ch. ii. 17: Prov. xxiv. 21. Ch. ii. 22: Isa. liii. 4, 6, 7, 9.—Chap. iii. 6: Gen. xviii. 12. Ch. iii. 10-12: Ps. xxxiv. 13, etc. Ch. iii. 14, 15: Isa. viii. 12, etc. Ch. iii. 20: Gen. vi. 3, 12.—Ch. iv. 8: Prov. x. 12; comp. xvii. 9. Ch. iv. 18: Prov. xi. 31.—Ch. v. 5: Prov. v. 34. Ch. v. 7: Ps. lv. 23.

NOTE B. p. 5.

Of the assertion in the text the reader will be furnished with ample evidence, in comparing the passages here noted:—1 Pet. i. 3; Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 20; Rom. iv. 24, xvi. 25; Col. i. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 13; Rom. xiii. 1-5. 1 Pet. ii. 16, etc.; Gal. v. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 18, iii. 1; Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 18. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4; 1 Tim. ii. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 22; Eph. i. 20, etc. 1 Pet. iv. 10; Rom. xii. 6, etc. 1 Pet. v. 1; Rom. viii. 18. 1 Pet. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Thess. v. 26. WETSTEIN notices a very remarkable character of style which Peter has, in common with Paul. "Ita sermonem suum ordinat ut membrum sequens ex precedentis fine inchoet et cum eo connectat.—i. 4. εἰς ὑμᾶς. 5. προφουμένους—ἐν καιρῷ ἰσχύατω. 6. ἐν ᾧ. 7. Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. 8. ὃν εἰδότες. 9. σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν. 10. περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας—προφητεύσαντες. 11. ἰευνῶντες." The same peculiarity strongly marks the first paragraphs of Rom. v. and Eph. i., and also the proem of the Gospel of John.

NOTE C. p. 5.

The following similarities between Peter and James are remarkable:—1 Pet. i. 6, 7; James i. 2, 3. 1 Pet. i. 24; James i. 10, 11. 1 Pet. i. 3, 23; James i. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2; James i. 21. 1 Pet. iv. 8; James v. 20. "Videtur omnino vel Jacobo Petri prior vel Petro Jacobi Epistola ob oculos versata fuisse; maxime si utraque Epistola ad easdem ecclesias pertinerit."—STORR, *Opuscula* ii. 52.

NOTE D. p. 14.

Matt. iv. 18, 19; Luke v. 3-11; John i. 40-42; Mark v. 37; Matt. xvi. 16-23, xiv. 28-31, xvii. 1-4, 24-27, xiii. 3, 4; Luke xxii. 8; John xiii. 6; Matt. xxvi. 36, 37; John xviii. 10, 11; Matt. xxvi. 31-35, 69-75; John xx. 2-7; Mark xvi. 7; John

xxi. ; Acts i., xii. 17, xv. 6-11, 14 ; Gal. i. 18, ii. 7-9, 11-14. *Vide* NEANDER'S Planting and Training of the Christian Church, vol. ii. pp. 23-41.

NOTE E. p. 19.

"There is an election to sanctification, as performed by the power of the gospel, separating the fore-ordained from the mass of forlorn men unto holiness of life. This is nothing else than effectual vocation."—BYFIELD. "Hic non proprie æterna electio significatur, sed electio in tempore e communi turba hominum ac imprimis Judæorum, quæ electio in Scriptura, alio modo, etiam vocatio, sive vocatio secundum Dei propositum appellatur."—BELG. ANNOT. "'Εκλεκτοί; vocati secundum electionem."—SCHROTANUS.

NOTE F. p. 20.

I think it right to mention that Ecumenius, and a number both of ancient and modern interpreters, have connected *κατὰ πρόβωσιν*, κ.τ.λ., with 'Απόστολος, and not with *ἐκλεκτοί*, referring to Rom. i. 1, and especially to Acts. xv. 7. This exegesis is so unnatural as not to require to be refuted. "*Πρόβωσις* hic non præscientiam, sed antecedens decretum significat ut et Act. ii. 23: idem sensus qui Eph. i. 4."—GROTIUS. There is no exegetical ground for explaining *προγιγνώσκειν* and its derivatives of "love," as has often been done to serve a purpose.

NOTE G. p. 21.

'Αγιασμός, segregatio illa sive credentium consecratio, separatio a reliquis hominibus extra Christum perituris.—BEZA. "Il vous a séparés effectivement d'avec eux, non pas en vous sanctifiant comme il fit le peuple d'Israël au désert, d'une sanctification externe et corporelle, seulement, lorsqu'il le fit arroser du sang de la victime, qui ratifia par sa mort l'alliance de la loi; mais en vous consacrant d'une sanctification intérieure et spirituelle lorsque par la vertu de sa vocation il vous a amenés à l'obéissance de son Evangile et à recevoir l'aspersion du sang de Jesus Christ épanché pour l'établissement de l'alliance de grâce en rémission des péchés."—AMYRAUT. SEMLER, usually no safe guide, seems right here; he considers the phrase as equivalent to *ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνευματικῷ*.

NOTE H. p. 21.

In that precious relic of Christian antiquity, the *ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Διόγνητον*, incorrectly attributed to Justin Martyr—written probably in the earlier part of the second century—the nature of the separation of Christians from mankind generally is thus described:—"The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves; they do not use a different language, nor affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and, while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They dwell in their own country, but as sojourners; they take a part in everything as citizens, and yet endure all things as strangers; every foreign country is as a fatherland, and every fatherland as a foreign country; they live in the flesh, but not according to the flesh; they pass their life on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. In a word, they are in the world what the soul is in the body. The soul is diffused through all the members of the body, and Christians through the cities of the world. But the soul, though dwelling in the body, is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. They dwell as sojourners in mortal things, expecting immortality in heaven."

NOTE I. p. 21.

It would be difficult to find an instance in which attachment to an artificial system of Christian doctrine has been carried further into the interpretation of Scripture, than the explaining, as NISBET does, "election into obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," of election to a participation in the active and passive righteousness of Christ,—obedience standing for the first, and blood for the second. In this instance of *παρερμηνεία*, our worthy countryman is not original. SCHOTANUS had given the same sense before him. His note is, "Ea est obedientia de qua Apostolus, Rom. v. 19."

NOTE K. p. 23.

The exposition given of this passage is that which the principles of a strict exegesis seem to require; and it is free from many difficulties which attend interpreting the passage according to our received translation. "Elect," in the sense of eternally chosen, "according to the foreknowledge of God," is language which seems to suit a conditional better than a sovereign choice. "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit," presents a very strange arrangement of ideas. Is "the foreknowledge of God," or "election" according to that foreknowledge, *through* sanctification of the Spirit? Surely "sanctification of the Spirit," meaning by that, sanctification by the Spirit, is the result of the divine decree,—the object of the divine foreknowledge,—the cause or means of neither. Then, what is to be made of "obedience," as placed before "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus"? Is not all obedience, which deserves the name, the consequence of being justified through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and being sanctified by the Spirit? and does the Spirit sanctify any who are not sprinkled with the blood of Jesus? All these difficulties, which I confess I cannot solve, are got rid of in the exegesis proposed. "Selected according to the divine foreknowledge," which is just equivalent to the divine purpose (Acts ii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 20), "by a spiritual separation unto obedience," that they "might obey the truth," i.e. believe the gospel, "and," through that "obedience" to the truth, "be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus,"—enjoy all the saving results of the death of Christ, in pardon, sanctification, and eternal life. In the only other passage (2 Thess. ii. 13) where the phrase *ἀγίασμός πνεύματος* occurs, it must be interpreted in the same way. The "choice" there seems plainly selection; by α. π. spiritual separation and "belief of the truth."

DISCOURSE II.

THE CHRISTIAN SALVATION DESCRIBED AND ACKNOWLEDGED.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."—1 PET. i. 3-5.

It has been finely remarked by a pious writer, that "it is a cold and lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things on mere report; but when men can speak of them as their own—as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness—their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief and ardent affection: they cannot mention them, but straight their hearts are taken with such gladness as they are forced to vent in praises."¹

Thus the Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesian church, when about to unfold the numerous, and varied, and invaluable benefits of the Christian's salvation, instead of commencing with a mere formal statement of them, bursts forth into a hymn of thanksgiving: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adop-

¹ Leighton.

tion of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom **WE** have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom **YE** also *trusted* (or rather *have obtained an inheritance*), after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”¹

And in the epistle before us, the Apostle Peter, whose object plainly is to confirm the converts to whom he wrote in the faith and practice and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding all the difficulties and trials to which they were exposed, in bringing forward the vast magnitude and the absolute security of the happiness which the gospel reveals and secures as one of the most powerful motives to perseverance, presents it in the impressive and animating form of devout ascription of praise to a redeeming God, in the name of himself and his believing brethren: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again

¹ Eph. i. 3-14.

unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

In illustrating this very interesting passage of Scripture, our attention must be directed,—I. To the blessings acknowledged; and II. To the acknowledgment of these blessings.

The blessings acknowledged are these: (1) the privilege of being the children of God—"God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again;" (2) an inheritance corresponding with this privilege—the "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," which is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven," and for which Christians are "kept by the power of God through faith;" and (3) a present well-grounded and joyful hope of this inheritance.

The acknowledgment of these blessings naturally turns our attention, (1) to the author of these blessings—God; (2) to the character in which he bestows them—"the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" (3) to the principle from which they flow—"his abundant mercy;" (4) to their vast magnitude and incalculable value; and (5) to the proper method of Christians expressing their sense of their magnitude and value, by blessing their Divine Author. Such is the outline which I shall endeavour to fill up in the remaining part of this discourse.

I. OF THE BLESSINGS ACKNOWLEDGED.

Let us then, according to this plan, consider, in the first place, the blessings which the apostle here so gratefully acknowledges.

§ 1. *Divine Sonship.*

The first of these is the privilege of being children of God. "God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again." When it is said, God hath "begotten us," the meaning is, 'God hath made us his children;' and when it is said that God hath "again," anew, a second time, "begotten us," the meaning is, 'we were his children in one sense before, but in another, a higher, a better sense, a sense in which we were not his children, he has now made us his children.'

As his rational creatures, the objects of his kind providential care, all men are the children of God. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" He is "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." "We are also his offspring."¹ But, as Christians, we have become the children of God in a sense in which all men are not his children. The appellation, children of God, as applied to true Christians in a mystical, spiritual sense, like most of their peculiar appellations, is borrowed from one of the titles bestowed on the peculiar people of God under the former economy. "Israel," said Jehovah, "is my son, my first-born." "Ye are the children of the Lord your God," says Moses. Jehovah is spoken of as "the Rock that begat them."²

When Christians are represented as the children of God, there are two ideas suggested by the appellation. They are brought by him into the relation of children; and they are formed by him to the character of children.

The relation in which every human being stands to God in the present state, previously to his being personally connected with Jesus Christ as the Saviour, is that in

¹ Mal. ii. 10; Acts xvii. 26-28.

² Ex. iv. 22; Deut. xiv. 1, xxxii. 18.

which a violator of the law, convicted and condemned, stands to his sovereign. He is the appropriate object of divine displeasure; in the language of Scripture, "The wrath of God abideth on him."¹ His ultimate happiness, if he remains in this state, is incompatible with the honour of God, the good order of his moral administration, and the well-being of his rational and accountable subjects.

But in the case of genuine Christians, a change of state takes place. The obedience to the death of God's incarnate Son makes the salvation of sinners consistent with, conducive to, the illustration of the perfections of the divine character, and subservient to the interests of the divine government. Faith in Christ is that which, according to the divine constitution, interests the individual sinner in the obedience to death of God's Son. On believing the truth, then, the individual who was condemned is no longer condemned—he is forgiven; he who was a sentenced criminal, is now a beloved child. The relation in which he now stands to God, is that of a son to a father. God no longer frowns on him,—he smiles on him. He no longer curses him,—he blesses him. He was "angry with him, but he now comforts him."²

When God makes men his children, he not only brings them into the relation of children, but he forms them to the character of children. When he gives men the privilege of being his children, he "sends forth into their hearts the Spirit of his Son," who forms in them a habitual temper and disposition, which may be termed "the spirit of adoption."³ Our sentiments in reference to God, while in our natural condition, are not childlike. Our state is that of condemned criminals, and our character corresponds with our state. The leading feelings of the unrenewed man towards God, are dislike and jealousy and fear—"the

¹ John iii. 36.

² Isa. xii. 1.

³ Gal. iv. 4-7; Rom. viii. 15.

fear that hath torment." But when God makes us his children, he forms us to the affectionate, confiding character of children. While he leads us to "sanctify him in our hearts," and to fear him without being afraid of him, he disposes us to love him as infinitely amiable and infinitely kind; and to trust in him, as perfectly knowing what is good for us, perfectly able to secure our welfare, perfectly disposed to make us happy.

To be thus brought into the state and formed to the character of God's children, form the two great elements of true happiness, as they form the two grand fundamental blessings of the Christian salvation. They are most intimately connected together. The being brought into the state of children is absolutely necessary to the being formed to the character of children. It is impossible to form a slave to the character of a freeman, without making him free. And the formation of us to the character of children, is the great design of God in bringing us into the state of children. He regards and treats us as his children, that we may regard him and treat him as our Father.

We become the children of God—both in reference to state and character, to condition and disposition—through the belief of the truth; and this belief of the truth is produced and maintained by the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We are "begotten" or "born" again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is through the faith of the truth that the condemned sinner is forgiven and justified: "He that believeth is not condemned, and can never come into condemnation;" while on him that believeth not, "the wrath of God abideth." And it is through the faith of the truth that the unholy sinner is sanctified. The heart is "purified by the faith." It is through the knowledge and

belief of the truth, with regard to God's character as a Father, that we are formed to the disposition and feelings of children. And this faith of the truth is the result of the influence of the Divine Spirit; so that, when born again—born from above—we are “born of the Spirit.”¹ So much for the illustration of this first blessing, for which the apostle presents his acknowledgments.

§ 2. *The inheritance provided for them.*

The second blessing is the future inheritance which God has provided for us as his children. He has “begotten us again to an inheritance,”—that is, that we may obtain an inheritance, etc. “If children,” says the apostle, “then heirs,”²—that is, ‘if he bring us into the relation and form us to the character of children, he will give us the treatment of children.’

When God made ancient Israel his children—brought them into a covenant relation with him—he assigned to them an inheritance. That inheritance was, like the economy to which it belonged, material and temporal. It was the large and fertile land of Canaan, which they were to possess in security and peace, but into which they were to enter not immediately—not till after a long course of wandering in the wilderness.

When God brings men into the relation of children under the new and spiritual and eternal economy, he assigns to them an inheritance which corresponds with the character of that new dispensation—an inheritance of which they are not to obtain the full possession, till “the end come, the consummation of all things.” The inheritance here is obviously the celestial blessedness, properly so called—the final state of good men—that state which, commence-

¹ Gal. iii. 26; 1 Pet. i. 23; John iii. 18; Acts xv. 9. *Τῇ πνεύματι.*

² Rom. viii. 17.

ing with the general resurrection, is to be continued unchanged, except by indefinite progress, for ever and ever. What is figuratively termed "the inheritance," ver. 4, is literally described, ver. 5, "as the salvation ready, or prepared, to be revealed in the last time."

Of that state we can form but very inadequate conceptions, for it has not yet been "revealed." "It does not yet appear what we shall be:"¹ it will be fully unveiled by and by, but not till "the last time"—the period of "the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." But we may form correct conceptions, so far as they go; and it is of the greatest importance that we should do so. It is a state of complete freedom from evil, both moral and physical, in all its forms, and in all its degrees; and it is a state of perfect holy happiness, suited to a spiritual nature, endowed with intellect and affection and active power, united to a material frame, every way suited to minister to its progressive improvement and enjoyment; a state in which every capacity of blessedness shall be filled to overflowing, and in which the growing capacity shall never outrun the increasing blessedness.

Knowledge and holiness are the two great elements of the celestial happiness. The holy spirits of the just made perfect, clothed upon with their house from heaven, the immortal, incorruptible, powerful, glorious resurrection-body, shall be perfectly conformed to God, so far as their limited capacities admit, in knowledge and purity and happiness. God's mind shall be their mind; God's will, their will; God's happiness, their happiness. They shall "know him as he is; and they shall be like him."² This is, I am persuaded, the justest view we can take of the celestial happiness. This is "the inheritance."

The celestial blessedness receives here, and in many

¹ 1 John iii. 3.

² 1 John iii. 2.

other passages of Scripture, the appellation of "the inheritance," for two reasons : to mark its gratuitous nature, and to mark its secure tenure.

An inheritance is something that is not obtained by the individual's own exertions, but by the free gift or bequest of another. The earthly inheritance of the external people of God, was not given them because they were greater or better than the other nations of the earth. It was "because the Lord had a delight in them to love them." "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own right hand save them ; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, for thou hadst a favour unto them."¹ And the heavenly inheritance of the spiritual people of God is entirely the gift of sovereign kindness. "By grace are ye saved;" "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."²

A second idea suggested by the figurative expression, "the inheritance," when used in reference to the celestial blessedness, is the security of the tenure by which it is held. No right is more indefeasible than the right of inheritance. If the right of the giver or bequeather be good, all is secure. The heavenly happiness, whether viewed as the gift of the Divine Father, or the bequest of the Divine Son, is "sure to all the seed." If the title of the claimant be but as valid as the right of the original proprietor, their tenure must be as secure as the throne of God and his Son.

The idea of the security of this happiness is brought forward, however, more distinctly in the description of the inheritance which immediately follows. It is described as "incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven" for Christians, while they "are kept by the power of God through faith" for it.

In this description of the inheritance, there are two

¹ Ps. xliv. 3.

² Eph. ii. 5 ; Rom. vi. 23.

things which require consideration : the excellence of the inheritance itself ; and the security that the Christian shall in due time enjoy it.

The excellence of the inheritance itself, consists in being “incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.”¹ These epithets may seem in a great degree synonymous, and there is no doubt that permanent, unchanging excellence is the leading idea in them all ; yet, on looking a little more closely at them, we shall find that each of them presents that general idea in an instructive and pleasing peculiarity of aspect.

The celestial happiness viewed as an inheritance, is “incorruptible.” There is nothing in its own nature which can lead to its dissolution. It is not material, but spiritual. It is not composed of “such corruptible things as silver and gold,” but of knowledge and of holiness. It is not “meat and drink ;” it is not costly and splendid apparel ; it is not stately buildings, nor extensive estates. It is “joy and peace” and happiness arising from sources which, from their very nature, are inexhaustible,—possession of the divine favour, conformity to the divine image, intercourse and fellowship with God.

It is not only incorruptible, and therefore everlasting, but it is “undefiled.” It is debased by no extrinsic, heterogeneous ingredient. In all our enjoyments on earth, however pure and exalted in themselves, there is a mixture. There is always something wanting—something wrong ; and sin, that vilest of all things, taints and pollutes them all. But into heaven there enters “nothing that defileth.” There is knowledge, without any mixture of error ; holiness, without any mixture of sin ; love, without any mixture of

¹ “*Ἀφθαρτος* æternum durans. ‘*Ἀμίαντος* purum—cui nihil mali, nihil vitii est admixtum—ut purum gaudium—gaudium cui nihil tristitiæ admiscetur. ‘*Ἀμάρτανος* non marcescens.—MORUS.

malignity; the highest dignities excite there no pride—the richest possessions, no covetousness. The inheritance is undefiled.

Still further, the heavenly inheritance is “unfading!” It “fadeth not away.”¹ The garland worn by the blessed is of amaranth—it never withers. The idea here seems to be, It not only is everlasting in its own nature, but it will never cease to give happiness to the possessor. How often do worldly possessions wither,—cease to give the happiness they once gave to those who continue to hold rather than to enjoy them! It has been beautifully remarked, that “the sweetest earthly music, if heard but for one day, would weary those who are most delighted with it. But the song of Heaven, though for ever the same, will be for ever new.”² Here we are often sated, but never satisfied; there, there is constant satisfaction, but there never will be satiety. Such is the excellence of the celestial inheritance.

‘But,’ may the Christian say, ‘the inheritance is indeed inestimably precious; but will it ever be mine?’ It is as secure as it is precious, says the apostle. It is “reserved in heaven for you,” and you are “kept for it by the power of God through faith.”

This inheritance is “reserved in heaven” for Christians,—that is, it is secured beyond the reach of violence or fraud. Many a person, born to a rich inheritance, has never obtained possession of it, but has lived and died in poverty; but this inheritance is liable to none of the accidents of earth and time. It is “in heaven,” under the immediate guardianship of DIVINE power, wisdom, and love.

‘But the inheritance may itself be secure, but not secure for me. There may be perfect happiness in heaven, but I may never reach it there.’ To meet this suggestion the

¹ ἀφάρτος.

² Leighton.

apostle adds, "Ye are kept by the mighty power of God through faith."¹ The apostle's doctrine is—and it is quite accordant with the doctrine of his Master and the other apostles—that all who are begotten again by God shall be preserved to the enjoyment of the inheritance. None of them shall fall in the wilderness. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," says Jesus Christ; "and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand."² "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."³

They are "kept"—preserved safe—amid the many dangers to which they are exposed, "by the power of God." The expression, "power of God," may here refer to the divine power both as exercised in reference to the enemies of the Christian, controlling their malignant purposes, and as exercised in the form of spiritual influence on the mind of the Christian himself, keeping him in the faith of the truth, "in the love of God, and in the patient waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ." It is probably to the last that the apostle principally alludes, for he adds "by faith." It is through the persevering faith of the truth that the Christian is by divine influence preserved from falling, and kept in pos-

¹ *Hereditas servata est: heredes custodiuntur. Neque illa his, neque hi deerunt illi.*—BENGEI.

² John x. 28.

³ Rom. viii. 35-39.

session both of that state and character which are absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.¹

The perseverance thus secured to the true Christian is perseverance in faith and holiness; and nothing can be more grossly absurd, than for a person living in unbelief and sin to suppose that he can be in the way of obtaining celestial blessedness.

So much for the illustration of the second blessing for which the apostle gives thanks—the future inheritance which God has provided for his children.

§ 3. *The living hope of the inheritance.*

Let us now proceed to consider the third of these blessings: the living or lively hope of the inheritance, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. God hath “begotten us again to a lively hope;” that is, in making us his children, he has excited in us an influential and enduring hope of final and complete happiness.

Mankind in their natural state are said to “have no hope;”² that is, they are without any well-grounded rational hope of final happiness. This is true of all men without exception, of the elect of God as well as of others. They have broken the divine law; they have incurred the divine displeasure. They are guilty, and depraved, and miserable. They deserve everlasting destruction; and if mercy interpose not, they must meet with their desert.

¹ “When *in* and *διὰ* are connected in one sentence, *διὰ* refers to external means, whilst *in* relates to that which is effected in or on a person, as if adhering to him. Eph. i. 7: *in* ᾧ (Χρ.) ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ. Even when impersonal things are spoken of, the distinction between *in* (of an internal psychological state or power), and *διὰ*, of means, is apparent; as 1 Pet. i. 5: τοὺς *in* δυνάμει Θεοῦ φρουρουμένους διὰ πίστεως; and ver. 22: *in* τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας, διὰ πνεύματος.”—WINER, Part iii. sec. 52, p. 312.

² Eph. ii. 12.

It is, then, an inquiry of very deep moment, how is the well-grounded hope of final happiness excited and maintained in the human mind? Now there are two questions which must be resolved, in order to our distinctly apprehending the truth on this subject; the first, what is the ground of the hope referred to in our text? and the second, how is an individual brought to cherish the hope of final happiness on this ground?

With reference to the former of these questions, it is obvious that the ground of hope is not anything in the sinner himself. It is not that he is innocent. It is not that he is less guilty than others. It is not that a great change has been produced, or is to be produced, on him. When he looks at himself in the light of the divine law, a sinner may well perceive abundant reason for fear, abundant reason for despair; but he can never perceive any sufficient reason for hope.

The ground of hope is not in us, but in God. The ground of the sinner's hope—(and the ground of the saint's hope is just the ground of the sinner's hope; for what is a saint but a saved sinner?)—is sometimes represented as the sovereign benignity of God; sometimes as the obedience to death, the finished work, the perfect atonement, of Christ; and sometimes as the free untrammelled revelation of mercy in the word of the truth of the gospel. These are all but different aspects of the same thing, and the truth on this subject may be thus stated: The ground—the sole ground—of a sinner's hope is the sovereign mercy of God, manifested in consistency with, and in glorious illustration of, his righteousness, in the obedience to death of his Son Jesus Christ, the just one in the room of the unjust, of which we have a plain and well-accredited account “in the word of the truth of the gospel.” The ground of hope is exhibited in such passages of Scripture as the following:—“God so

loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."¹

The second question is, How is the sinner brought to cherish the hope of eternal life on this ground? Now, if the preceding remarks have been understood, there can be no difficulty in answering this question. The free sovereign mercy of God, manifested in a consistency with his righteousness, is revealed in the gospel; and it can only be by that gospel being understood and believed, that the individual sinner can obtain the hope of eternal life. If I believe this revelation, I hope for eternal life, and I hope for eternal life on this ground. If I do not believe this revelation, I either have no hope of eternal life, or, if I have, it is a hope built on another and a false foundation. It is in the faith of the truth that the sinner finds hope. Not that the sinner's

¹ John iii. 16; Rom. iii. 21-25; 1 Tim. i. 15; 2 Cor. v. 19, 21; Heb. vii. 25.

faith is the ground of his hope, but that it is through believing alone that he can discover the ground on which his hope must rest. When Elisha's servant was overwhelmed with fears lest his master should fall into the hands of the Syrians, these fears were turned into assured hope, when, with enlightened eyes, he beheld the heavenly host with which they were surrounded. His hope rested, not on his seeing that host, but on their being there; but still his seeing them there was in the nature of things necessary to his hope.¹ In like manner the sinner's hope rests entirely on God's free sovereign kindness, manifested in harmony with his righteousness; but it is only in the belief of the truth that this sovereign kindness can be apprehended as a ground of hope.

The ground of hope never varies. The ground of the hope of eternal life to an aged and accomplished saint, just about to enter paradise, is the very same as to the most guilty and depraved of men who has just been brought to the knowledge and faith of the truth. "The beginning of our confidence" is the end of our confidence. Our first hope is our last hope.

It follows, of course, that the great means of maintaining and strengthening hope, is just the continued and the increasing faith of the truth. At the same time it is plain from Scripture, that as the faith of the truth uniformly produces holiness as well as hope, unholy tempers are in their own nature calculated to cloud our hope; and holy tempers and conduct to strengthen it, not by adding to its foundation, but by affording evidence that we have built on that foundation.

There are two other questions respecting this hope, which, though not of such vital importance as those which I have now endeavoured briefly and plainly to answer, are

¹ 2 Kings vi. 15-17.

yet of very considerable interest at all times, and particularly at present, when much darkening of counsel by words without knowledge, on this subject, seems to me to prevail.¹ Is the hope of eternal life connected with the faith of the gospel? And does every believer enjoy an unclouded hope of eternal life?

With regard to the first question, I unhesitatingly reply in the affirmative. The gospel cannot be believed without, in the degree in which it is believed, producing the hope of eternal life. It is not only not necessary that a sinner should wait till the faith of the gospel has proved its efficacy in a moral transformation of his nature, before he begin to cherish the hope of salvation, but he cannot believe the gospel without cherishing that hope; and it is through means of this hope that the gospel believed, in a great measure, works that moral change. To believe the gospel, and to despair of salvation, are two utterly incompatible states of mind. We hold, then, that every believer, according to the measure of his faith, has the hope of eternal life.

And in this principle we also find the true answer to the second question: 'Does every believer enjoy the unclouded hope of eternal life?' He does enjoy that hope according to the measure of his faith. If he is strong in faith, he abounds in hope. But as every believer in the present state has but an imperfect apprehension both of the truth and of its evidence, and is still to a certain extent under the influence of false views, every believer, while in the present state, is imperfect both in holiness and in hope. At the same time, his imperfection in both is not more his misfortune than his fault. A perfect faith of a completely understood gospel would produce unshaken, unclouded hope, and enable

¹ The reference here is to the speculations about Universal Pardon, which, at the time this discourse was delivered, December 1830, were very prevalent in this country.

the Christian at all times, in all circumstances, to "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

This hope of eternal life, grounded on the sovereign mercy of God manifested, in harmony with his holiness and righteousness, through the mediation of Christ, revealed in the gospel, and excited, maintained, and strengthened by the faith of the gospel, is described here as "a lively," or rather "a living hope."¹ The hope of the Christian is a "living" hope, in opposition both to a dead and a dying hope—in opposition to the dead hope of the hypocrite, and the dying hope of the self-deceiver.

The Apostle James speaks of "a dead faith," which, on examination, turns out to be no faith at all, but merely a man's saying he has faith.² There is also a dead hope, which is in reality no hope at all, but merely a profession of it. A mere professed hope, founded on a mere professed faith, is a dead thing; it can make a man neither holy nor happy; it cannot animate to duty; it cannot support under suffering. But the hope of the Christian is "a living hope." It fills him with joy and peace in the degree in which it prevails; and it leads him to purify himself, even as he in whom he places his confidence is pure. The hope of eternal life is the well-grounded expectation of perfect holy happiness. Now is it not perfectly plain, so plain as to need no illustration, that this must be a living operative hope, and that, just in the degree in which it exists, it must make him in whom it dwells both holy and happy? It will induce a man to submit to the greatest evils rather than renounce the faith of Christ; and it will keep him cheerful and happy amidst all the sacrifices which he may be called on to make in the cause of his Saviour.

This hope is termed "a living hope," not only in opposition to a *dead* hope, but also in opposition to *dying* hopes.

¹ ἡ ζῶσα ἐλπίς.

² James ii. 17.

There are many hopes which are not merely professed, but really entertained, that will never be realized. This is true both as to worldly hopes and as to religious hopes. With regard to worldly hopes, have we not all from experience discovered the truth of the remark,—“They are not living, but lying, dying hopes. They often die before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and simplicity in trusting to them, and at the utmost they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further”?¹ With regard to religious hopes, it is a happy thing when all of them, not founded on the faith of the truth, die before we die; for till these dying hopes expire, the living hope cannot exist. All hopes of eternal life, excepting that which we have been endeavouring to describe, will most assuredly expire when we expire, and make those who relied on them ashamed and confounded world without end. But this hope lives in death. This hope remains unshaken by all the calamities which can befall the believer here; for he knows nothing can separate him from the love of God. Death and judgment and eternity do not destroy, they fulfil this hope; and as the object of the hope is ever-enduring holy happiness, it is plain that hope as well as enjoyment must continue for ever.

This “hope makes not ashamed,” that is, it never disappoints; and, if you would know the reason, you will find the Apostle Paul assigning it, from the 5th to the 10th verse of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: “Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth

¹ Leighton.

his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."¹

This living hope is produced "by" means of "the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead."² The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most striking and satisfactory proofs of the divinity of his mission, and, of course, of the truth of all its doctrines; and, among the rest, of that grand characteristic doctrine of his gospel on which the hope of eternal life is founded. It is, indeed, not so much one evidence as "a cloud of witnesses." It is the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions respecting the Messiah, and thus proves him to be the Messiah; it is the fulfilment of his own predictions, and therefore proves him to be a true prophet. It is God determining the controversy between him and his unbelieving countrymen. He declared himself to be the Son of God, and they put him to death because he declared himself to be the Son of God; and God interposed, and by doing for him what none but God could have done, proved that he was right, and they were wrong. Most powerfully was Jesus Christ demonstrated to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.³

But there is a more intimate connection than this between the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the hope of eternal life. Christ's resurrection from the dead is a clear proof of the reality and efficacy of his atoning sacrifice. He "who was given for our offences, has been raised again

¹ The above remarks, somewhat amplified, have been repeatedly published, under the title of "Hints on Hope."

² Δι' ἀναστάσεως. Hoc pendet a ζῶεν. Col. v. 21.—BENGEL.

³ Rom. i. 4.

for our justification.”¹ When God “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant,” he manifested himself to be “the God of peace,” the pacified Divinity. He “raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in himself.” Had Jesus not risen, “our faith had been vain; we should have been still in our sin,”² and without hope. But now that he has risen,

“Our surety freed, declares us free,
For whose offences he was seized;
In his release our own we see,
And joy to view Jehovah pleased.”

But even this is not all. Our Lord’s resurrection is to be viewed not only in connection with his death, but with the following glory. Raised from the dead, he has received “all power in heaven and on earth, that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him.” How this is calculated to encourage hope, may be readily apprehended. “Because he lives, we shall live also.” Having the keys of death and the unseen world, he can and will raise us from the dead, and give us eternal life. He sits at the right hand of God. “Our life is hid with him in God; and when he who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.” We are not yet in possession of the inheritance; but he, our head and representative, is. “We see not yet all things put under us; but we see him,” the Captain of our salvation, “for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.”³ The resurrection of Christ, when considered in reference to the death which preceded and the glory which followed it, is the grand means of producing and strengthening the hope of eternal life.

Let us all beware of false hopes. Let him who never

¹ Rom. iv. 25. ² Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 17.

³ John xiv. 19; Rev. i. 18; Col. iii. 3; Heb. ii. 9.

hoped, now receive the truth in the love of it, and begin to hope. Let those who have believed abound in hope. There is, there can be, no danger of hoping too confidently, if the hope be but placed on the right foundation. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that¹ ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

II. OF THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THESE BLESSINGS.

The devout acknowledgment of these blessings comes now to be considered: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." This devout acknowledgment naturally leads the mind to reflect on God as the author of these blessings; on the character in which he bestows them, "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" on the principle in which the bestowal of these blessings originates, "abundant mercy;" on their vast magnitude and inestimable value; and on the proper manner of Christians expressing their sense of this magnitude and value.

§ 1. *God is the Author of these blessings.*

The first remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that God is the author of the blessings acknowledged. This is not only implied in making the acknow-

¹ *ἵνα*. Heb. vi. 11, 12.

ledgment,—for when we return thanks for a favour, to whom do we offer our acknowledgment but to him who has bestowed it?—but it is distinctly expressed: God has begotten us again. God has provided us an inheritance. God has given us a living hope.

God is the author of all good. All the holiness and all the happiness in the universe come from him. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” In the new creation, “all things are of God.”¹ The blessings enjoyed by Christians are all the free gifts of his sovereign goodness. HE makes us his children. HE brings us into the relation of children. HE forms us to the character of children. When we are brought into the relation of children, our sins are forgiven, and we are justified freely by God’s grace. But “who can forgive sins, but GOD only?” “It is GOD that justifieth.”² The sentence of the law can be remitted only by the great Lawgiver. The privilege of being the sons of God can be conferred by none but God. As it is God who brings us into the relation of children, it is God who forms us to the character of children. “For we are HIS workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” It is God who, by the agency of his own Spirit, through the instrumentality of his own word understood and believed, transforms the character of a condemned felonious slave into that of a beloved and dutiful child. It is HE who takes “the hard and the stony heart out of our flesh, and gives us a heart of flesh.” It is HE who disposes us to venerate, and esteem, and love, and trust him. It is HE who enables us cheerfully to obey his commandments, and submit to his appointments. It is HE who sends forth his Spirit into our hearts, teaching us to cry, “Abba, Father.”³

¹ James i. 17; 2 Cor. v. 18.

² Mark ii. 7; Rom. viii. 33.

³ Eph. ii. 10; Ezek. xi. 19; Gal. iv. 6.

As it is God who makes us his children, bringing us into the filial relation, forming us to the filial character, so it is God who has provided, and who will bestow on his people, the inheritance corresponding to the relation into which he has brought them, and the character to which he has formed them. "It is the FATHER'S good pleasure to give them the kingdom." The final happiness of the saints is entirely the result of DIVINE love, and wisdom, and power. "Eternal life is the gift of God."¹ God himself is, indeed, if I may use the expression, the very substance of the celestial blessedness. To know him—to see him as he is—to find in him the adequate object of all our unbounded capacities of knowledge, and affection, and enjoyment—to love him, and to be loved by him, and to know that we are loved by him—to be like him, having no mind different from his, no will opposed to his—to enter into his joy, and thus to have our joy made full,—this is the inheritance; and who can thus give us God, but God himself?

And all that was necessary, in order to make the communication of such a happiness to such creatures as we are—guilty, righteously condemned—consistent with the honour of the divine character, and all that is necessary to make such depraved creatures as we are, capable of such a happiness, is the work, not of men nor of angels, but of God. His love originated the purpose, his wisdom formed the plan, his power will work out the accomplishment, of his people's salvation.

As the inheritance is his gift, so also is the hope of the inheritance. It is God who gives us the living hope. The ground of that hope is HIS sovereign kindness; that kindness is displayed in harmony with righteousness, in HIS giving HIS Son to be the propitiation for the sins of men. This display of his sovereign kindness is made in HIS reve-

¹ Luke xii. 32; Rom. vi. 23. .

lation of HIS will by "holy men who spoke as they were moved by HIS Spirit;" and this revelation, in the belief of which alone the condemned sinner can find hope, is understood and believed by the individual sinner in consequence of the effectual working of HIS Spirit. It was HE who "delivered his Son for our offences." It was HE who "raised him again for our justification." It is HE who disposes us to believe this revelation of mercy. It is HE who thus gives us "good hope through grace." Every measure of the living hope, from the faint dawn which opens on the mind of the sinner coming to the knowledge of the truth, to the clear unclouded radiance which enlightens the mind of him who has received "the full assurance of understanding," every measure of this living hope is the gift of God; and we end as we began the illustration of this particular with the sublime declaration of the apostle respecting the new creation: "All things are of God." "Of HIM, and through him, and to him, are all things." "God is all in all."¹

§ 2. *It is as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God bestows these blessings.*

The second remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that in bestowing the favours here acknowledged, God acts in the character of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God is infinitely holy, and cannot but disapprove sin—cannot but loathe and abhor it in a degree of which we can form no adequate conception. God is inflexibly just, and can "by no means clear the guilty." He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. The foolish shall not stand in his sight; and he hates the workers of iniquity." "Snares, fire and brimstone, and a furious tempest, will he rain on

¹ Rom. iv. 25; 2 Thess. ii. 16; 2 Cor. v. 18; Rom. xi. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 28.

the wicked; this pertains to them as the portion of their cup.”¹ How is it, then, that this holy and righteous God blesses sinful men with all heavenly and spiritual blessings? How is it that he makes *them* his children, gives them a heavenly inheritance, and cheers them with a living hope?

It is as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that he does all this. In the riches of his sovereign mercy he determined to save an innumerable multitude of sinful men, and in the depth of his wisdom he formed a plan for realizing the determination of his mercy, not merely in consistency with, but in glorious illustration of, his holiness and justice. The leading feature in that plan is, the appointment of his only-begotten Son to be the representative of those who were to be saved, to be dealt with as they deserved to be dealt with, that they might be dealt with as he deserved to be dealt with. The second person of the glorious Trinity is essentially his Father’s equal, possessed of the same divine essence and perfections; but in this assumed character he is the Father’s inferior; he acts a subordinate part in the economy of salvation. God, essentially considered, in the person of the Father, is the God of “the Mediator between God and man;” and he is his Father, not merely essentially, as he is the second person of the Trinity, but also economically, as he is the head of the chosen family—“the first-born among many brethren.”

The great truth intended to be taught us by God being represented as the author of spiritual blessings to men, in the character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is this—that it is only as viewed in connection with him, or, as the inspired writers usually express it, as “in him,” that we sinners can obtain any saving blessing from God. The order is, “All things are ours; we are Christ’s; Christ is God’s.” He is our God because he is his God;

¹ Ex. xxxiv. 7; Ps. v. 4, 5, xi. 6.

our Father, because he is his Father.¹ Take the blessings mentioned in the text as an illustration. God makes us his children; that is, he pardons our sins, he receives us into his favour, he conforms us to his image. Now, how does he do this? He gives "us redemption in Christ, the forgiveness of sins." He makes us "accepted in the Beloved." "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." He gives us an inheritance. How? In Christ. "In him," says the apostle, "we have obtained an inheritance." He makes us to "sit in heavenly places in him."² He gives us a living hope. How? While "without Christ," viewed as unconnected with Christ, there is no hope for man: all his well-grounded expectations of happiness must be founded on what Christ has done, and is doing, as the representative of his people. While in the new creation all things are "of God," all things are "through Christ Jesus." It is as well pleased with him, that God is well pleased with us; and it is as his God and Father, that he blesses us "with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in him."

§ 3. *These blessings originate in the "abundant mercy" of God.*

The third remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that in the bestowing of these blessings on us by God, there is a remarkable display of the divine benignity. It is "according to his abundant mercy that he begets us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." This remark invites us into a very wide field of most interesting and improving illustration; but I must satisfy myself with merely opening

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23; John xx. 17.

² Eph. i. 3-13.

to you a few tracks of thought, which you will do well to pursue in private meditation.

Think on the character of him who bestows these blessings,—the absolute, independent Jehovah, perfectly, infinitely, unchangeably happy in himself. How could the self-incurred ruin of guilty mankind affect his interest? It might illustrate his holiness, his righteousness, his faithfulness; but how could it disturb his peace, or lessen his blessedness? It is impossible to conceive the communication of saving blessings to man to originate in any principle in the divine mind but sovereign benignity. If man be saved, it is “only because God had a delight in him to love him.”

Think on the nature of the blessings,—the very highest which can be conferred on creatures, the noblest in their own nature, and in their measure limited by nothing but the capacity of the recipient. “Behold what manner of love” is this,¹ to be God’s sons, to see him as he is, to be like him, and all this for ever and ever!

Think on the character of those on whom they are bestowed,—sinners, guilty, depraved, righteously condemned; deserving everlasting destruction; in the state in which mercy finds them, forgetters, haters, contemners of God. Surely the mercy which confers such blessings on such sinners is abundant mercy, and the apostle may well say, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that *we* should be called the sons of God!”

Think of the number of those on whom these blessings are bestowed. “The nations of the saved” are a numerous host.² The sons who are to be brought to glory are “many sons.” They are “a great multitude, an innumerable company, out of every kindred and people and tongue and nation;” and all these are blessed up to their largest

¹ 1 John iii. 1.

² Rev. xxi. 24, vii. 9.

capacity of enjoyment, during the whole eternity of their being. Is not this abundant mercy?

Once more, think of the means through which the blessings are communicated,—the incarnation, the sacrifice of God's own Son. He did not spare him, he "delivered him up for us all," that he with him might freely give us all things. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

Surely it is in his "abundant mercy" that "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places."

§ 4. *These blessings are of vast magnitude and incalculable value.*

The fourth remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that the blessings acknowledged are of vast magnitude and of incalculable value. The plain meaning of the acknowledgment is this: "For conferring these blessings on us, God richly deserves to be thanked and praised uninterruptedly, everlastingly." For every blessing, even for a breath of air, a crust of bread, a draught of water, a moment of ease, we ought to give thanks; for we are unworthy of any favour. Everything in the shape of blessing coming to us from God should excite our gratitude. But the blessings mentioned in the text are obviously peculiarly valuable. They are not "such corruptible things as silver and gold." They include in them deliverance from guilt, depravity, degradation, death, everlasting misery; the enjoyment of the favour of God, tranquillity of conscience, ever-growing conformity to the

¹ 1 John iv. 10; John iii. 16.

divine image in holiness and happiness, throughout eternity. Just look at them as here described, and say if they are not unspeakably great, incalculably valuable. What is said of the love in which they originate may be equally applied to them: They have "a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which pass knowledge."¹

§ 5. *The proper method of acknowledging these benefits is, to "bless" their munificent Giver.*

The fifth and last remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that the appropriate manner of expressing our sense of the magnitude and value of these blessings is, to bless their munificent author. When God blesses men, he confers on them blessings, he makes them blessed: when men bless God, they merely declare that he is infinitely excellent and blessed in himself; that he deserves to have his infinite excellences acknowledged and celebrated; that they recognise this obligation as lying on them; and that they wish to express, by every proper method, their sense of the infinite praiseworthiness of the Divinity.

Nothing surely can be more reasonable than that those who have received such blessings as are here acknowledged, should bless him who has bestowed them. This is one of the purposes for which they are begotten again. "This people," may Jehovah say of them, "I have formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." "Ye are a chosen generation," says the apostle, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."² Christians ought to cultivate the feelings of gratitude for the blessings they have received, and which they hope to receive, and often to express their

¹ Eph. iii. 18, 19.

² Isa. xliii. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

feelings in thanksgiving and praise. Indeed their whole lives should be a hymn of praise to the God of their salvation. The habitual language of their heart should be, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never be forgetful of his benefits! who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."¹

If we really feel gratitude to God for his abundant goodness, we shall express it not merely by our lips, but by our lives. Constrained by "the mercies of God, we shall present our bodies (ourselves) living sacrifices, holy, and acceptable, which is our reasonable service." While we through Christ "offer to him continually the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name," we will also "do good and communicate," knowing that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" and while we feel ashamed of the coldness of our feelings of gratitude, and the imperfection of our services of acknowledgment, we will look forward with earnest longings to that happy period when, having been made partakers of the inheritance, we shall, under the influence of the gratitude which "the salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory," fully possessed, is fitted to exert over a thoroughly sanctified human heart, join in the rapturous anthem of eternity: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."²

¹ Ps. ciii. 1-4, lxxxvi. 12, 13.

² Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16; Rev. v. 13.

DISCOURSE III.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONTRASTED.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 PET. i. 6-9.

THE first step towards the satisfactory interpretation of a long, complicated, parenthetical sentence like that just now read, is to analyse it. The sentence consists of a direct assertion, with a long parenthesis interposed. The direct assertion is, "In that time, the last time, ye greatly rejoice; ye rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The parenthetical statement is, "though *now* for a season, if need be"—or, "since there is need, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, though you have not seen, ye love, not seeing him, but believing in him."

With respect to the direct assertion, a careful reader will easily perceive, that though expressed in the present time, it refers to the future.

The time of the Christian's joy unspeakable and full of glory, is the last time, contrasted with the time of his trial—"now;"¹ when he shall receive the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul—the same period which is described as that of "the appearing," or manifestation, "of Jesus Christ." Instances of an assertion made in the present tense, when it plainly refers to the future, are not unfrequent. "Yet a little while I am," that is, shall be, "with you, and then I go," that is, shall go, "unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am," that is, shall be, "thither ye cannot," that is, shall not be able to "come." "How are," that is, shall be, "the dead raised, and with what bodies do," that is, shall, "they come?" "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth," that is, shall proceed, "out of their mouth, and devoureth," that is, shall devour, "their enemies."²

The phrases, "a joy unspeakable and full of glory," are too strong to describe the Christian's habitual feelings in the present state; and we find the very same words employed, in reference to the happiness of the final state, in an after part of the epistle. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."³

The meaning of the apostle would have been more evident to an English reader, had the assertion been rendered in the future time; "in which time," that is, in the last time, ye shall greatly rejoice—(though now for a season,

¹ It is rendered by the future in the Latin Vulgate, and versions made from it. "Enallage præsentis pro futuro: quod epitheta aperte ostendunt." —PAREUS.

² John vii. 33, 34; 1 Cor. xv. 35; Rev. xi. 5.

³ Ch. iv. 13. The parallelism of the two passages is striking:—Ch. i. 6, 8: *ἐν ᾧ (i.e. ἐσχάτῃ καιρῷ) ἀγαλλιῶσθε χαρῇ ἀνικαλήτῃ καὶ διδοξαμίνῃ.* Ch. iv. 13: *ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, χαρῇ τε ἀγαλλιάμενοι.*

since it is needful, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations ; that the trial of your faith, which is more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ : whom, not seeing him, but believing on him, ye love, though ye have not seen him)—“ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul.”¹

The passage, thus interpreted, contains in it a beautiful and instructive comparison, or rather contrast, of the state of Christians in the present and in the last time, on earth and in heaven. The points of comparison or contrast are the following :—I. Now and here, Christ, the great object of their affection, is not bodily present with them, is but imperfectly known by them, and all their knowledge of him, and all their intercourse with him, are by means of faith ; then and there, he will be bodily present with them, intimately known by them, and their knowledge and intercourse will be direct and immediate. II. Now and here, they are exposed to manifold trials ; then and there, they will enjoy the glorious results of these trials. III. Now and here, complete salvation is a subject of faith and hope ; then and there, it shall be the subject of enjoyment. IV. Now and here, they are for a season in heaviness ; then and there, they shall “greatly rejoice,”—they shall “rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.” In the remaining part of the discourse I shall endeavour shortly to illustrate this contrasted view of the present and the future state of the true Christian.

¹ The interpretation we have been led to prefer, is that supported by Œcumenius and Theophylact among the Greek fathers ; by the translators of the Vulgate ; by Luther, Vatablus, Clarius, Pareus, Benson, Pott, and others. Τὸ Ἀγαλλιάσθαι ἀντὶ μίλλωντος ἰληται.—ŒCUMENIUS.

I. CHRIST ABSENT AND BELIEVED ON, CONTRASTED WITH
CHRIST PRESENT AND SEEN.

The first point of contrast is, that now and here, Christ, the great object of their affection, is bodily absent from them—is but imperfectly known by them, and all their knowledge of him is by means of faith; then and there, Christ will be revealed, manifested: he will be bodily present with them; he will be intimately known by them; and their knowledge and intercourse will be direct and immediate.

Christ is the great object of his people's affection; he is, by way of eminence, **HE** whom they love. This is an essential element of the Christian character. When a person is brought under divine influence to understand and believe the gospel, he perceives that in Christ Jesus centres every amiable excellence in absolute perfection; and that the benefits which he has obtained for us, are infinite in number, value, and duration. He appears at once infinitely lovely and infinitely kind. Contemplating his glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth," the believer says in his heart, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."¹ Reflecting on what he has done and what he has suffered, what he has given and what he has promised, the believer says in his heart, "I love him, because he first loved me." I love him who "loved not his life to the death," for my salvation. I love him who hath "washed me from my sins in his own blood, and made me a king and a priest to God, even his Father."² The Christian has other objects of affection besides his Saviour; but **HE** is the object of his supreme affection.

¹ John i. 14; Cant. v. 10, 16.

² John iv. 19; Rev. i. 5.

In comparison of HIM, "he hates even his father and mother."¹

It is of the essence of love to seek union with its object. We naturally wish to be present with, to become intimately acquainted with, to have frequent intimate intercourse with, the object of our affection. These wishes of the Christian, in reference to the great object of his affection, are, can be, but very imperfectly gratified in the present state. He whom we love was once a man among men. Yes, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men." "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same."² There was a time when it was possible to have become, in the ordinary sense of the term, familiarly acquainted with Jesus Christ; and I believe very few Christians, not naturally deficient in the imaginative and affectionate parts of our nature, have ever read the history of his going out and in among his chosen followers, without in some measure envying their enjoyments. Who has not occasionally felt a wish rising in his heart that he had come into existence eighteen centuries sooner, and that he had had his lot cast in that land gladdened and dignified above all lands by the presence of the incarnate Divinity—that so he might have contemplated the humble shrine of the divine glory, and seen its radiance bursting through in miracles of power and mercy—that he might have gazed on that countenance which beamed with divine intelligence and benignity, and listened to that voice which poured forth a stream of divine wisdom and truth and kindness? Who has not sometimes said in his heart, O happy family of Bethany, all whose members were the objects of Jesus' peculiar love, and under whose hospitable roof he spent so many of his hours! O that, like the three favoured disciples, we had been admitted to witness the glory on "the

¹ Luke xiv. 26.

² John i. 14; Heb. ii. 14.

Holy Mount," and to watch and weep with him amid his agony in the garden of Gethsemane! O that we had seen him displaying at once the tokens of his unexampled love, and the proofs of the reality of his resurrection! O that we had been with the two disciples when he so opened the Scriptures about himself, as to make their hearts burn within them! O that we had heard the cheering salutation, "Peace be unto you," and felt his warm breath when he said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Such wishes are natural, I believe, to the renewed mind; and though they belong, it may be, to the weakness of regenerated humanity, I do not think they will be severely judged by Him "who knows our frame, and remembers we are dust."

In the present state, however, these longings cannot be gratified. On the day on which he "led out his disciples as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them," "the heavens received him," and they must "retain him till the times of the restitution of all things."¹ And with this arrangement we have good reason to be satisfied, both for his sake and our own. For his sake: for what has earth to offer in the shape of dignity and enjoyment, in comparison of that "name above every name," which he bears in the heaven of heavens, or of those "rivers of pleasures" that are at his Father's right hand? "If we loved him, we would rejoice that he has gone to the Father." For our own: for "it was expedient for us that he should go away; for if he had not gone away, the Comforter would not have come; but having gone, he has sent him to us."² Yet still, though we know and believe all this, we feel that our happiness would be increased were we allowed to see his face, and to hear his voice; for we are sure "his voice is sweet, and his countenance is comely."

¹ Luke xxiv. 20, 21; Acts iii. 21.

² Phil. ii. 9; Ps. xvi. 11; John xiv. 28, xvi. 7.

But not merely is Jesus Christ, the great object of his people's love, bodily absent from them in the present state; while they are here, they can be but very imperfectly acquainted with him. They *are* acquainted with him, and they would not part with their knowledge of him for all the stores of human science. They feel that "it is life eternal to know him;" and they "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ They know, and they are following on to know, him. They are studying his word, and they are studying his providence, which are both manifestations of Him, and they are thus gradually becoming better acquainted with him. But there is much in his word that they but imperfectly comprehend. There is much in his providence which perplexes and confounds them. If it were not their own fault, they might know much more of him than they do; for he is not backward to manifest himself to his people in another way than he does to the world. A more careful study of the Bible, and a more careful study of providential dispensations in the light of the Bible, would be found exhaustless sources of satisfactory information about Him whom we love, affording most amazing displays of his wisdom and power, and faithfulness and kindness. Yet, however carefully these means might be improved, still would it be true that here "we see through a glass darkly; we know but in part,"² in reference to him whom we love.

While in the present state, our knowledge of him, and our intercourse with him, are through the medium of faith. "We do not see him—we believe in him." His mind and his heart are made known to us in his word. It is only so far as we understand this word that we know him; and it is only so far as we believe it that we have intercourse with him; his mind then becoming our mind, and his will our

¹ John xvii. 3; Phil. iii. 8.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

will. It is true that we have "the Spirit whom he hath given us;"¹ but that Holy Spirit does not directly give us information about Christ: he only, by his enlightening influence, enables us to understand and believe the information contained in the Scriptures; and while, if we are Christians, we are "joined to the Lord,"² and are "one spirit" with him we love, the intercourse of holy desire and affection is carried on entirely by means of clear and impressive views of revealed truth. Such is the Christian's situation while here below, in reference to the object of his supreme love. He is not bodily present with us; he is but imperfectly known by us; and all our knowledge of him, and intercourse with him, are through the medium of faith.

It will be otherwise by and by. In "the last time" there will be "a revelation of Jesus Christ." At the appointed season He will bodily return to earth for the entire salvation of his chosen ones. He will then deliver them completely from "the last enemy" by raising them from the dead; and in his glorified body will for ever dwell in the midst of his people, all of them possessed of bodies "fashioned like unto his glorious body." "Ye men of Galilee," said the angels to the disciples who stood gazing up to heaven, after the cloud had received the ascending Saviour out of their sight—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up to heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "Behold," says John the divine, hurried forward by the inspiring Spirit to "the last time," even "the time of the revelation of Jesus Christ,"—"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." The man Christ Jesus, ordained to be the Judge of the world, shall descend from heaven, and having raised the dead, and pronounced and executed righteous

¹ 1 John iii. 24.

² 1 Cor. vi. 17.

judgment on all the living and the dead, shall return to heaven, and spend the endless years of eternity amid his reanimated and completely redeemed people, a glorified man amid glorified men, their Lord and yet their brother, the visible Head of his visible body, the Church—"the fulness of him that filleth all in all."¹

That the happiness of the saints will be greatly increased by the bodily presence of their Lord and Saviour and Brother, there can be no doubt. But "the revelation of Jesus Christ" seems to me to import something more than this—something still more closely connected with the happiness of his people. He will not only be bodily present with them, but he will be much more extensively known by them. A much more complete manifestation will be made of his excellence and kindness, and they will be rendered much more capable of comprehending this manifestation. Every obscurity in his word will then be removed. Every dark dispensation will be explained. "In his light they shall see light."² The excellences of his personal character, the wisdom and benignity of his mediatorial administration, and the nature and transcendent dignity of his mediatorial honours, will all be apprehended to an extent, and with a clearness, of which at present we have no conception. The meaning of the scriptural descriptions of his excellences will then be distinctly understood by his people; and they will find that he is excellent and amiable above all that they have thought. The whole of his varied dispensations in the administration of universal government shall appear a consistent display of infinite wisdom, righteousness, and benignity; and the glories of that higher order of administration which is to characterize

¹ Acts i. 11; Rev. i. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 26, 42-55; 1 Thess. iii. 15-17; Phil. iii. 20, 21; Eph. i. 23.

² Ps. xxxvi. 9.

the celestial state, shall be as fully displayed to them as the limited faculties of their glorified nature admit.

The only other idea which I wish to bring before your minds just now, in illustration of this point of contrast between the present and the future state of the Christian, is, that whereas now, all our knowledge of, and all our intercourse with, Christ is through the medium of faith, then it will be direct and immediate. How knowledge is then to be communicated to us by him, how our intercourse with him is to be carried on, we cannot distinctly say, we cannot clearly conceive. We know it will be as different from our present mode of obtaining knowledge and maintaining intercourse, as seeing a thing is from merely crediting a report about it. We shall live, not by faith, but by sight. We shall see no longer as "by means of a mirror,"¹ but face to face: we shall know no longer in part; we shall know as we are known." Our knowledge will not be infinite, but it will be very extensive and perfectly clear, altogether unmixed with error or doubt. So much for the illustration of the first point of contrast.

II. THE TRIALS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT STATE CONTRASTED WITH THEIR RESULTS IN THE FUTURE STATE.

The second point of contrast between the present and future state of Christians is, that now and here, Christians are exposed to numerous and varied trials; then and there, they shall enjoy the glorious results of these trials. Christians in the present state are exposed to "temptations," to "manifold"—that is, numerous and varied—"temptations." Temptation is ordinarily used to signify enticement to sin; but in the New Testament it frequently signifies afflictions

¹ Δι' ὁπίσσω, ἢ ἀνίσταται.—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

generally, viewed as trials, and this is obviously its meaning in the passage before us. The apostolical assertion then is, Christians are exposed in the present state to numerous and varied afflictions, and these numerous and varied afflictions are trials of the reality and strength of their faith, and hope, and love, and patience, and other graces.

An abstract consideration of the divine character, and of the relation in which true Christians stand to God, would lead us to expect that they should be completely exempted from affliction. He is infinitely powerful, and wise, and good. They are the objects of his peculiar love. Is it not natural, then, to conclude, that from the moment they are brought into the relation of children to him by faith in Christ Jesus, they should be freed from evil in all its forms and degrees, and made happy up to their largest capacity of happiness? But "his ways are not our ways; nor are his thoughts our thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts."¹

Christians are not exempted from the ordinary evils of life. It is true of them, as of mankind generally, that they are "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." They are "of few days and full of trouble." Poverty, reproach, sickness, disappointment, sorrow, pain, and death, are the lot of the saint as well as the sinner. Many who are "rich in faith" are "poor in this world," strangers to the comforts and conveniences, and but scantily furnished with even the necessities of life. They may be, they often are, the subjects of the most painful and loathsome diseases; and the general law of mortality holds in their case equally as in that of their irreligious neighbours,—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Indeed, in very many cases, a larger proportion of suffering than ordinary seems

¹ Isa. lv. 8, 9.

to fall to the lot of the children of God. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."¹

Besides the afflictions which are common to the saint as a man, there are others which are peculiar to him as a Christian. He is exposed to suffering from the world "lying under the wicked one," and he is exposed to suffering from the wicked one himself. "In the world," said our Lord to his followers, "ye shall have tribulation;" and the Faithful Witness did not lie. All who have lived godly in this world have suffered, "all who will live godly must suffer, persecution." Some of them have "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain by the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; destitute, afflicted, tormented, they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."² And even where they are not exposed to open violence, they find that "this world is not their friend, nor this world's law;" that the world which hated their Lord and Master does not love them; and that a malignant influence in reference to their best interests is constantly proceeding forth from "the present evil world."

In addition to trials from the world, the Christian is exposed to affliction from the assaults of his unseen enemies. He has to strive not only "with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickednesses in high places." "His enemy the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."³ His fiery darts, when not

¹ Job v. 7, xiv. 1; James ii. 5; Gen. iii. 19; Heb. xii. 6.

² John xvi. 33; 2 Tim. iii. 12; Heb. xi. 36-38.

³ Eph. vi. 12; 1 Pet. v. 8.

warded off by the shield of faith, sink deep into the heart, and inflict, though not a deadly, yet a most painful wound ; and the buffetings of some of his messengers are all but intolerable.

All these afflictions, from whatever quarter they come, are " trials." They are intended to prove and to improve the Christian, to try at once the reality and the vigour of his gracious principles ; and not only to try them, but to strengthen them. This, then, is the state of the Christian : while here, he is exposed to numerous and varied afflictions, by means of which he is tried and improved.

But in the state of final happiness there will be no affliction. The trial, having served its purpose, shall cease, and nothing but the glorious result of the trial will remain. "The trial of the Christian's faith" by means of these manifold afflictions, "is more precious than the trial of gold." The apostle does not here directly contrast faith and gold, but the trial of faith and the trial of gold.¹ Trial by fire improves gold ; it frees it from all debasing alloy, but it does not render it indestructible. Refine gold as you will, it is, after all, a perishing thing. But the trial of the faith of the Christian has a nobler result. Purified and strengthened by the trials it is exposed to under the influence of the Holy Spirit, faith, with all the graces which grow out of it, survives the wreck of all material things, and "at the revelation of Jesus Christ is found to praise, and honour, and glory." The results of all the trials to which they have been exposed in the present state, will be found in that character of perfect conformity to the image of God, in which consist at once their perfect holiness and their perfect happiness.

"Praise, honour, and glory" are synonymous expressions, and are equivalent to a very strong superlative. The

¹ Παλὸν τιμώτερον χρυσίου—i.e. τοῦ δοκιμίου τοῦ χρυσίου.—GROTIUS.

praise, glory, and honour, may be referred either to the saints themselves or to their Lord and Saviour: to the saints themselves, for we know that "praise, and honour, and glory" shall be to every saint "in the day when Jesus Christ shall judge the secrets of all hearts;" to their Lord and Saviour, for we know that "he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."¹ It has been beautifully remarked, "These two will well agree together; that it be both to their praise and to the praise of Christ; for certainly all their praise and glory will end in the praise and glory of their head, Christ who is God over all, blessed for ever. They have each their crown, but their honour is to cast them all down before His throne."²

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT STATE, A STATE OF EXPECTATION; HIS FUTURE STATE, A STATE OF ENJOYMENT.

The third point of comparison or contrast between the present and future state of Christians is, that now and here, complete salvation is the object of faith and hope; then and there, it will be the object of enjoyment.

Saints in the present state are made partakers of many of the blessings of the Christian salvation. So far as the purchase of salvation is concerned, immediately on believing the truth they are interested indefeasibly in that all-perfect work of Christ which secures their everlasting happiness. They obtain the forgiveness of all their sins. "In him they have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins." They obtain deliverance from the prevailing power of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over them."³ They obtain a joy, and peace, and satisfaction, to which, till they believed, they were strangers. But still they are but very imperfectly

¹ Rom. ii. 10; 2 Thess. i. 10.

² Leighton.

³ Eph. i. 7; Rom. vi. 14.

possessed of the Christian salvation—complete deliverance from evil in all its forms and all its degrees.

We have seen that they are still exposed to the ordinary calamities of life, to the persecution of the world, and to the temptations of Satan. They are still but imperfectly delivered from their innate depravity. Sin, though it no longer reigns, yet dwells in them. There is still much darkness in the understanding, much disorder in the affections, much perversity in the will. They are far, very far, from being “holy as God is holy, perfect as he is perfect.” This mortal has not yet put on immortality. This corruptible has not yet put on incorruption. In one word, perfect holy happiness, complete salvation, is in the present state the object not of enjoyment, but of faith and hope. “We ourselves,” says the apostle, “who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”—the final deliverance on the day of the resurrection; “for we are saved by hope”—that is, our salvation at present is not in possession, but in expectation: we are not so much saved as we hope to be saved: “For hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”¹

In the future state, however, Christians shall obtain, in all its extent and perfection, “the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.” They shall receive² “the end of their faith, even the salvation of their soul.”

The final salvation is termed the salvation of “the soul,” not to exclude the salvation of the body; “for we look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall

¹ Rom. viii. 23-25.

² “*Καταζέμεται* metaphora a victoribus in stadio, qui potiti victoria post absolutum certamen, de manu Agonothecæ reportant bravium vel coronam.”—PAREUS.

change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body;" but because the soul in itself, immaterial and immortal, is both the nobler part of human nature, and the immediate seat of that holy happiness in which the Christian salvation essentially consists.¹

This salvation is said to be "the end of their faith"—that is, I apprehend, the termination of their faith.² The attainment of complete salvation shall no more be a matter of faith; it shall be a matter of experience. They will no more believe that they shall be saved; they will know that they are saved. We are persuaded that faith will continue for ever in heaven; but the object of faith will then be, not the attainment of a complete salvation, but the eternal continuance of the enjoyment of a complete salvation already attained. In one word—here Christians believe they shall be saved, here they hope to be saved; there they are saved.

IV. THE SORROWS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT STATE CONTRASTED WITH THE JOYS OF HIS FUTURE STATE.

The fourth point of contrast is, Now, and Here, Christians are "for a season in heaviness" on all these accounts; Then, and There, they will "rejoice, greatly rejoice, rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." The bodily absence of Jesus Christ, their imperfect knowledge of him, their indirect and interrupted intercourse with him, their manifold trials, their imperfect enjoyment of the blessings of the Christian salvation—all these naturally produce, to a certain degree, a depression of spirit. The Christian is "in heaviness." He mourns

¹ Phil. iii. 20, 21. See note A.

² Heb. x. 39.—"ἵνα ἀποσταλῇ tends to, ends in ἀπόλυσιν. Πίστις tends to, ends in περιποίησις ψυχῆς—the same thing as σωτηρία ψυχῆς.

the absence of his Lord, and says in his heart, "O that I knew where I could find him, that I might come even to his seat!" Under the pressure of bodily affliction or mental distress, he is constrained to cry out, "I am oppressed—undertake for me." Harassed with the movements of remaining corruption, he groans out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" And feeling that he is saved but in hope, he sighs out, "How long, O Lord, how long?" "When shall I come and appear before God?"¹

This heaviness of heart is but for a season; it is, at least in an oppressive degree, not constant, but only occasional, and at any rate it is only for the season, the short season, of mortal life. And what should still further prevent Christians from murmuring, is the thought that, if they are in heaviness even for a season for these causes, it is "since there is need for it."² All is ordered, and all is well ordered. HE does not "afflict willingly, nor grieve" without a cause.³ Everything in the saint's lot is arranged in the way best suited to promote his true, his everlasting welfare.

But in the future state there will be no heaviness, no, not even "for a season." It will no more be needful. Affliction will have served its purpose, and will for ever cease. There, then, will be nothing but unmingled happiness and unending rejoicing. "They shall rejoice; they shall rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable," which cannot be adequately expressed, "and full of glory,"—that is, either in the highest degree glorious and excellent, or full of gloriation or triumph. It is needless for us to attempt to illustrate this subject; we can do nothing but quote a few passages of Scripture, which in all their extent

¹ Job xxiii. 3; Isa. xxxviii. 14; Rom. vii. 24; Rev. vi. 10; Ps. xlii. 2.

² *si diu leri.*

³ Lam. iii. 33.

of meaning seem applicable only to this final state of happiness. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy on their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw her shining; for the Lord God shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹

Thus have I shortly considered the beautiful and instructive contrast contained in the text between the saint's condition on earth and in heaven. And now, in conclusion, ought not all Christians, with the apostle, to "reckon," judge, conclude, on the most satisfactory premises, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them;" and that, however heavy and long-continued, that "affliction" is but "light," and "for a moment," which "worketh out for them such a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"?²

Who would not be a Christian? For ah, how different are the prospects of the unbeliever! He too must see Christ Jesus, whom he does not love, but it will be as a righteous judge, coming "in flaming fire to take vengeance" on him as an adversary of God. His afflictions here will prove to have been but "the beginning of sorrows:" what

¹ Isa. xxxv. 10, lx. 19, 20; Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

² Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

he now fears he will then feel, and feel to be far worse than he feared; and instead of joy unspeakable and full of glory, there will be woe, unutterable but in "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."¹

Let Christians live like those who have such prospects. Let them "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know their labour is not in vain in the Lord;" and "having such promises," let "them cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

NOTE A. p. 76.

Perhaps there is in the expression *σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν* a reference to the scriptural trichotomy of human nature.—1 Thess. v. 23; Heb. iv. 12; Phil. i. 27; Luke i. 47; 1 Cor. xv. 44; Ex. xxxv. 21. *Ψυχή* is that to which moral corruption and consequent misery cleave. In the present state it is but partially subjected to the *πνεῦμα*, which is "life because of righteousness;" but at the revelation of Jesus Christ, *σῶμα*, *ψυχή*, and *πνεῦμα*, shall all equally, according to their nature, enjoy the *σωτηρία*. Rom. viii. 10, 11. Bengel considers *ψυχή* as used generally of the spiritual part of man. His note is, as usual, brief but significant. "Anima præcipue salvatur: corpus in resurrectione participat." It has been thought by some, that there is here a tacit reference to the Jewish hope of external bodily deliverance from slavery and oppression by the Messiah. The Christian's hope is, "the salvation of the soul."

¹ 2 Thess. i. 8; Matt. viii. 12.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTION, NEW TESTAMENT RE- VELATION, AND ANGELIC STUDY.

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into."—1 PER. i. 10-12.

IF we would satisfactorily understand any book, or any passage in a book, there are two points which we must distinctly apprehend, and never lose sight of. These are, what is the subject of which the author treats, and what is the object which he has in view in treating it. Let us endeavour to ascertain these two points with regard to that paragraph which I have just read, and which I intend to make the subject of the following discourse.

The subject of the apostle is, plainly, the final deliverance and complete happiness which Christians are to obtain at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is spoken of as "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven ;" as "the salvation prepared to be revealed in the last times ;" as "the grace which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is plainly the subject of the paragraph.

With regard to the object of the apostle in treating this

subject, it is obviously to sustain the minds of the Christians to whom he wrote, amid the manifold trials to which they were exposed—to enable them to remain “stedfast and unmoveable” in the profession of the faith, and in the practice of the duties of their high and holy calling. He states the truth with regard to the immeasurable grandeur and absolute certainty of this final salvation, that they might be induced to “gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope to the end,” that they might “fashion themselves as obedient children,” and “be holy in all manner of conversation, as he who had called them is holy.”

No means could be better fitted to gain the end proposed, than that adopted by the apostle; for if they firmly believed that such a salvation certainly awaited every one who “held fast the beginning of his confidence stedfast to the end,”¹ it is obvious that the smiles and the frowns, the allurements and the terrors of the world, would be equally powerless to shake their attachment to that Lord who will in due time so munificently reward all his faithful followers.

The manner in which the apostle brings the magnitude and certainty of this salvation before their minds, shows that he, as well as his “beloved brother Paul,” speaks “according to the wisdom given to him.”² He first describes it generally, as “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, while they are kept to it by the power of God through faith.” Then he brings out more prominently its characteristic excellences, by describing it in contrast with the present state of the people of God. In opposition to a state in which Jesus Christ, the object of the Christian’s supreme affection, is bodily absent from him, in which his knowledge of him is limited and obscure, and his intercourse

¹ Heb. iii. 14.

² 2 Pet. iii. 15.

with him carried on entirely through the medium of believing, it is exhibited as a state in which Christ is bodily present with his people, in which their knowledge of him is extensive and distinct, and their communion with him direct and immediate; in opposition to a state in which they are exposed to numerous and varied trials, it is exhibited as a state in which, freed from all trials, they shall enjoy the glorious results of those trials to which in a previous state they had been subjected; in opposition to a state in which complete deliverance and happiness are objects merely of faith and hope, it is exhibited as a state in which they are the objects of enjoyment; and, in fine, in opposition to a state in which they are "for a season, since it is needful, in heaviness," it is exhibited as a state in which they shall for ever "greatly rejoice—rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory."

In the paragraph which forms our text, the apostle takes another and an equally efficient method of bringing before the minds of his readers the greatness and the certainty of this final salvation, by representing it as one great or leading subject of Old Testament prophecy, apostolic preaching, and angelic study. "Of this salvation the prophets prophesied;" of this salvation "they who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven made a report;" and "into this salvation the angels desire to look." In the remaining part of this discourse, then, I shall turn your attention to the view which the apostle gives us of the final salvation of Christians: first, as the subject of Old Testament prophecy; secondly, as the subject of apostolic preaching; and thirdly, as the subject of angelic study.

I. THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

Let us first, then, attend to the statement which the apostle makes as to this final salvation being the subject of Old Testament prophecy.

“Of,” or concerning, “this salvation the prophets¹ inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they did minister.”

The truths taught us in these words are the following :—The ancient prophets, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, predicted that final salvation which remains for the people of God ; they diligently inquired into the meaning of their own predictions ; and they obtained information that these predictions referred to blessings not to be conferred during the economy under which they were placed, but during that higher one which was to supersede it. The first of these truths is taught us in these words : “The prophets prophesied of the grace which should come to you ;” “The Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” The second of these truths is taught us in these words : “Concerning this salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.” And the third truth is taught in these words : “To them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they did minister.”

The ancient prophets predicted that final salvation which

¹ *Articulus hic prætermisus grandem, ut sæpe etiam apud Germanos, facit orationem.*—BENGEL.

will be bestowed on the people of God at the coming of Jesus Christ. "They prophesied of the grace which should come to us." "The grace which should come to us" has often been considered as a general expression for the blessings of the New Testament economy, on earth as well as in heaven—"the grace which came by Jesus Christ;"¹ but if we look closely at the passage, we shall find the sole subject to be the final and complete salvation awaiting Christians, or, as it is expressed more fully, "the grace that is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The words, "they prophesied of the grace which should come to us," are then just equivalent to, 'they predicted the final salvation which awaits the people of God.'

The same sentiment is, I apprehend, repeated in another form of words, when it is said, "The Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."² The Holy Ghost is termed "the Spirit of Christ," inasmuch as he is essentially related to the second person of the Trinity, who is Christ, as well as to the Father; and inasmuch as previously, no less than subsequently to his incarnation, all communications of the divine will were made by the Son through the Spirit. Never was there a time when the Father immediately revealed himself. "The only-begotten Son, who is in his bosom, he declared him"—declared him by the Spirit. This divine person, inspiring the prophets, taught them what things to reveal, and in what words to reveal them. To use the language of one of

¹ John i. 17.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 21. A valuable dissertation on the last of these passages is to be found in "Knappii Scripta Varii Argumenti."

themselves, "He spake by them, and his word was on their tongue."¹

This Spirit of Christ, then, "testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." These words naturally suggest, and have been ordinarily understood of, the personal sufferings and glories of Jesus Christ, the degradation and sorrows to which the incarnate Son was exposed, when, "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and the high dignity and inconceivable happiness to which he was raised when "God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name," "angels, and authorities, and powers; being made subject to him."² I am persuaded, however, that if we attend to the connection of the words, and to the words themselves, we will find they do not refer to the personal sufferings and glories of Christ, but to the sufferings of his people during the present state, and the glories which are to follow "in the last time," "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is not the sufferings of Christ personally, and the subsequent glories, which are the subject of the apostle's discussion, but the manifold trials to which Christians are exposed for a season, and the glory which is to be theirs in the last time. Looking at the construction of the passage, we naturally conclude that the clauses, "the prophets prophesied of the grace which is to be brought to us," and, "the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow," are parallel—that the prophecy of the prophets, and the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, refer to the same thing.

Besides, the original expression is quite peculiar,³ and is altogether different from that ordinarily rendered "the

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

² Phil. ii. 8, 9; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

³ τὰ παθήματα εἰς Χριστόν.

sufferings of Christ.”¹ It is literally—“the sufferings in reference to Christ,” that is, on Christ’s account, in Christ’s cause; or the sufferings till Christ, that is, the sufferings to be undergone by his body the Church, and by every member in particular, till he come “the second time,” not as a sin-offering, but for their “salvation.” The sufferings till Christ,² and the subsequent glories, are then just “the afflictions of the present time, and the glory which shall be revealed in us;”³ and the apostle’s statement is, the ‘prophets, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, predicted the sufferings to which Christians are to be exposed in the present state, and the glories which are to be bestowed on them at the second coming of their Lord.’

Let us then show, by the quotation of particular passages from the Jewish Scriptures, that the final salvation of the people of God was indeed the subject of Old Testament prediction. Before commencing these quotations, however, let us recollect that we are not in the Old Testament declarations to expect what, for perspicuity and distinctness, can compare with the declarations “which they who have preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” have made to us. It is enough that we meet with declarations of a completeness of deliverance and a perfection of happiness far surpassing anything ever yet enjoyed by the Church on earth—far surpassing anything the New Testament warrants her to expect till her Lord return. I think it right also to add, that I am not prepared to assert that all the passages which I quote have a *direct* reference to the *heavenly* state, though it is only in that state that the blessings predicted will be enjoyed in that perfection which will completely exhaust the meaning of the prophetic oracles.

The first prediction I quote, of the final and complete

¹ τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

² See note A.

³ Rom. viii. 18.

salvation of the people of God, is the prophecy of Enoch, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints."¹ This may seem a prophecy rather of the destruction of God's enemies than of the salvation of his people; but the two events are closely connected, and it seems to me probable that the apostle refers to this prophecy when he says, "Them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."²

The next prediction that I shall refer to, is that wonderful passage in the nineteenth chapter of Job, "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and with lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."³

I now turn your attention to a passage in the eighth Psalm: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? for thou hast" (after he had been in a state equal to the angels as to immortality) "made him a little" (rather for a short season) "lower than the angels; and" (then, afterwards) "hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; thou hast put all things under his feet."⁴ That this refers to the final salvation of the redeemed from among men, is obvious from the apostle's commentary on it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He plainly applies it to redeemed man: "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified,

¹ Jude 14.

² Job xix. 23-27.

³ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

⁴ Ps. viii. 4-6.

saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But we see not yet all things put under him" (redeemed man): "But we see Jesus" (who was a man—the head of the ransomed race), "who was made a little" (for a season) "lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man." He suffered, and then was glorified, and thus shall it be with all his people.¹

There are other quotations from the Psalms that deserve notice: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, in thy likeness." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."²

The following quotations from the prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, and Malachi, will serve as further specimens of the manner in which the prophets prophesied of the grace which is to be brought to us, and in which the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, testified beforehand of the glories which were to follow the sufferings till Christ:—"Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and

¹ Heb. ii. 5-9.

² Ps. xvii. 15, xxiii. 6, xxxvi. 7-9.

before his ancients gloriously." "He shall swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "And many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."¹ All these oracles speak of "suffering" as the lot of a peculiar people down to a particular period, and of "glory that is to follow" that period.

These prophetic oracles were but imperfectly understood by those who uttered them. We are not to suppose, however, that in uttering them their minds were entirely passive, and that the Holy Spirit employed only their organs of speech to express words to which they attached no idea. They understood the meaning of the words; they were the expression of thoughts communicated to their minds. They

¹ Isa. xxiv. 23, xxv. 8, xxvi. 19, lx. 19, 20; Dan. xii. 2; Hos. xiii. 14; Mal. iii. 18, 19.

knew that they referred to great blessings to be bestowed on the Church; but as to the precise nature and extent of these blessings, and as to the period when and the manner in which they were to be bestowed, they were much in the dark. "The prophecy came not by their own will." It was "not of *self-interpretation*."¹ Either the event referred to, or another explicatory revelation, was necessary to unfold fully its meaning.

These holy men were desirous of knowing all that could be known on the subject. They "inquired and searched diligently" concerning the salvation—the grace which was to come to us; "they searched what, or what manner² of time, the Spirit of Christ did signify, when he testified beforehand the glory which was to follow the sufferings until Christ." They wished to know when, and in what circumstances, these glorious predictions were to be fulfilled; and the means they employed for that purpose were the study of the Scriptures, comparing one passage with another, and fervent supplication to God. We have an example of this in the case of Daniel, in reference to another class of prophecies: "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years; and I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek" (further insight as to what and what manner of time) "by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."³

The prophets did not obtain all the information they desired; but it was revealed to them, that "not to themselves, but to us, they did minister those things which have been reported to us by those who preached the gospel with

¹ ἰδίαις ἐκλήσεις οὐ γίνονται.—2 Pet. i. 20.

² Εἰς τίνα ἢ πᾶν. *Quod innuit tempus per se quasi dicis seram suis numeris notatam. Quale dicit tempus ex eventibus variis noscendum.*—BENGEL.

³ Dan. ix. 2, 3.

the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." "Those things which have been reported," etc., are, I apprehend, the statements made by the apostles with regard to the final salvation of the people of God. It was revealed to the ancient prophets, that this glorious salvation was not to be enjoyed under the Jewish economy; that it was to take place "in the latter days"—"in the last times"—in the days of the Messiah. They were made to perceive that their predictions would be better understood, and therefore would be more useful to those who lived under the Messiah, than they were to themselves. "They ministered not to themselves, but to us;" that is, these predictions, uttered by them, though not useless to them (for they, like Abraham, wished to see the day of Christ, and "saw it afar off, and were glad"), are still more useful to us who have had them explained by a further revelation. The apostle's idea has been very finely illustrated by the following beautiful figure: "The sweet stream of their doctrine made its own banks fertile and pleasant, as it ran by and flowed still forwards to after ages, and, by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew larger as it proceeded, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel revelation; and thus united into one river clear as crystal, this doctrine of salvation hath still refreshed the city of God, and shall continue to do so till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity."¹

How strikingly does the fact, that the *final* salvation was the subject of prophetic testimony from the beginning, illustrate at once the grandeur of this salvation, and the certainty that it shall in the appointed season be conferred on the people of God! That must be a glorious object to which God, by his Spirit, directed the admiring eyes of inspired prophets, while at the distance of so many thousand years. The highest conceptions we can form of it must

¹ Leighton.

come inconceivably short of the truth, when we think of it as the glorious termination of the whole wondrous systems of nature, and providence, and grace, which have been in operation for nearly six thousand years.

And the fact that it is the subject of Old Testament prophecies, proves not only its grandeur, but its security. We have "the word of prophecy more confirmed"¹ than the Old Testament believers. They had enough to make it most reasonable in them to believe, that whatever was predicted in the Scriptures should be fulfilled; but we have far more evidence than they had for the second coming of the Lord, and the complete salvation that is to accompany it. We have the fulfilment of the predictions as to the first coming, and many succeeding events, to confirm our faith. The final salvation of believers at the second coming of the Lord, is one of those things which ought to be "most surely believed among us." If we do not believe it, it is not for want of evidence. He will come "the second time;" and to all who look for him, he will come "unto salvation."

If it was the duty of the ancient prophets to inquire into the meaning of the oracles revealed by them respecting the great salvation of the people of God at the coming of the Lord, it certainly must be our duty to do so. Every part of divine revelation deserves and requires study; and surely those portions of it which have a reference to the coming of Christ, and the complete salvation of his people, have a peculiar claim on our attention. The extravagances into which some students of prophecy have run ought not to prevent us from imitating the ancient prophets in "inquiring and searching diligently concerning this salvation," knowing that a blessing is pronounced on him "that readeth," and on them that "hear the words" of that

¹ Ἐσχόμεν βιβαιοτέρως τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον.—2 Pet. i. 19.

prophetic book which is the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹ "Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and inquiry, that had the Spirit of God not only in a high degree, but after a singular manner,—how unbecoming, then, is slothfulness and idleness in us! Whether is it that we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men, or that we esteem the doctrines and mysteries of salvation, on which they bestowed so much of their labour, unworthy of ours? We do ourselves much injury, if we bar ourselves from sharing in our measure of the search of those same things that were the study of the prophets, and which, by their studying and publishing them, are made more accessible and easy to us. These are the golden mines in which the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy of all the digging and pains we can bestow upon them."²

II. THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF APOSTOLICAL PREACHING.

The final salvation of the people of God at the second coming of Jesus Christ, is the subject of apostolical preaching. Things in reference to that salvation, concerning which the prophets prophesied and made inquiry, "have been reported to us by those who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

"Those who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," are, we apprehend, the apostles and other miraculously gifted teachers of the primitive age. They "preached the gospel;" that is, they published the glad tidings of a full, free, and everlasting deliverance from sin and all its dreadful consequences, through the mediation of the incarnate Son of God, who having expiated sin by

¹ Rev. i. 3.

² Leighton.

the shedding of his own precious blood, which cleanses from all sin, has been raised from the dust of death, and invested with all power in heaven and earth, that he may be able to save to the uttermost all coming to God by him.

They preached this gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." These words intimate, either that their preaching the gospel was accompanied with miraculous works, proving the truth and the divinity of what they taught,—works which they were enabled to perform by the Holy Ghost, whose miraculous influence was "sent down from heaven,"—that is, communicated to them by God,—or that their preaching was accompanied by the influence of the Divine Spirit on the minds and hearts of those to whom it was addressed, leading them to attend to, to understand, and to believe it; "opening their understandings" to understand the truth, and "their hearts to receive the love of the truth, so as to be saved by it." Both these statements are true, and I think it not improbable that the words of the apostle were meant to include both. "The Lord the Spirit" "bore testimony to the word of grace" in both ways. "The so great salvation was begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard him; and God bore witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will."¹ When Peter was preaching the gospel to Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." When Paul preached to the Thessalonians, "Our gospel," says he, that is, the gospel as preached by us, "came not to you in word only, but in power, and with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance;"²—with abundant evidence given by him, and apprehended by them.

These holy apostles of our Lord Jesus, who, in words

¹ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

² Acts x. 44; 1 Thess. i. 5.

taught not by men but by the Holy Ghost, preached the gospel with evidence and with efficacy both derived from the Divine Spirit, "made a report" concerning the things of which the prophets had prophesied, and into which they had inquired; that is, they made a report concerning the final salvation which is to be bestowed on believers at the second coming of their Lord. Much of their preaching was occupied in telling us what is the nature of that salvation; what Jesus Christ had done and suffered in order to procure that salvation; how the individual sinner is to become a partaker of its blessings; and in showing that there is a present salvation from guilt and the dominion of sin, and the tormenting fear of divine displeasure and everlasting misery. But it also included in it a plain statement of the fact that the full salvation of the Christian is not to be bestowed on him till the second coming of his Lord, and a description more or less particular of the varied and complete blessedness which was then to become his portion.

"They reported" these things. In making these declarations, they did not utter the dreams of their own imagination, or the deductions of their own reason. They merely "spoke the things which they had heard." They made known to others what had been made known to themselves. This was true of all they said; and, in particular, in reference to things which they reported concerning the final salvation of the people of God. They did not "follow cunningly devised fables when they made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus." "The things which God had laid up for them who love him, were things which eye had not seen, which ear had not heard, and which had not entered into the heart of man; but God revealed them to them by his Spirit;"¹ and of this revelation they made a faithful report.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16; 1 Cor. ii. 7-10.

Let us attend, then, to the report which those men who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven have made respecting this salvation, which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Their report refers both to what their Lord and Master revealed on this subject when he was on earth, and to what was revealed to them by that Holy Spirit whom he promised to send to them, to "lead them into all the truth."

Let us attend first, then, to the report they have given us of what our Lord, when on earth, revealed respecting this salvation. The following passages of Scripture contain that report :—" Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." " When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory ; and before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? When saw we thee a stranger, and took

thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And the righteous shall go away into life eternal." "In the end of the world the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life. The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth; they who have done good to the resurrection of life." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."¹

The following passages embody revelations made directly to the apostles by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven:—"God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for

¹ Matt. xix. 27-29, xxv. 31-40, 46, xiii. 41, 43; John iii. 16, v. 24, 26, 29, vi. 38, 40, xiv. 2-4.

glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. Glory, honour, and peace shall be to every man that worketh good, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same, in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. The saying that is written shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory." "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." "The Lord shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall first arise.

Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord." "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense—to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." "An entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. I will give him a crown of life. He shall not be hurt with the second death. I will give him to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it; and I will give him the morning star. He shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out. I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." "And there shall be no more curse; and there shall be no night there; and they shall reign for ever and ever."¹

These are "the things which have been reported to us by them who have preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." There is a good deal in

¹ Rom. ii. 6, etc.; Rom. viii. 18-25; 1 Cor. xv. 20, etc.; 2 Cor. v. 2, 3; Col. iii. 3, 4; 1 Thess. iv. 13; 2 Thess. i. 6, etc.; 2 Pet. i. 11; Rev. ii. *passim*; Rev. iii. *passim*, xxi. 4, xxii. 1-5.

in the scale of being, who excel
and who find their happiness in
excellences and in doing the

beings are represented as "de-
things which respect the final
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ful. They are with earnest desire
their intensest gaze on these things.¹
expression probably alludes to the

him above the mercy-seat, who with
represented as looking on the mercy-
penetrate the mystery of wisdom and
every law, covered by the blood-sprinkled
embodied.

reason to think that the angels directly
are about the final salvation of the re-
than we do. It is "by the Church,"
dispensations of God to the Church, that
and powers in the heavenly places"
of with that revelation of "the manifold
contained in the plan of human redemp-
no doubt that they know all that is revealed
this subject; and that, from their higher
their more diligent study, and their juster
ed views of the divine perfections, and of
the happiness of intelligent creatures, they
revealed there much better than we do.

not satisfied—they are desirous to
drous divine declarations more com-
looking forward with intense desire to

¹ *man'hai*.—See Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 5;

the period when fulfilment shall develop the full extent of their meaning. Nor is it at all difficult to divine what are the principles in the minds of angels which make them thus desire to look into these things. Enlightened curiosity, piety, and benevolence, all combine in turning their attention with unwearied interest towards this subject.

Enlightened curiosity, or the desire of useful knowledge, is one of the characteristic features, we have reason to believe, of angelic as well as human minds. They know far more than we do, but there is much they do not know; and it is probable their thirst for knowledge exceeds ours just in a similar proportion to their possession of knowledge. It is easy to conceive how desirous they must be of knowing what it is for "corruption to put on incorruption," what it is for "mortality to be swallowed up of life." Enlightened philosophers have great pleasure in witnessing, and in expecting to witness, experiments tending to throw light on the processes of nature. A world in flames, the elements melting with fervent heat, and the heavens flying away like a scroll, and new heavens and a new earth rising out of the fiery chaos, are spectacles which it is not wonderful the angels should look forward to with eager desire and almost holy impatience.

Their piety interests them still more deeply in the subject. This salvation is to be the full manifestation of the divine excellences, as displayed in the whole of that wonderful economy which shall then be completed. Angels will then see more of the power, and wisdom, and holiness, and benignity of God than they had ever seen, than they had ever conjectured; and then, in the final pulling down of everything which opposes his will or obscures his glory, they will obtain the fullest gratification of the strongest wish of a loyal creature's heart—"that God may be all in all."

Their benevolence, too, keeps their minds fixed on the subject. "They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They "encamp round about them that fear God, and deliver them."¹ They have a kind interest in, a tender affection for, those committed to their care. They regard their manifold trials with a benignant pity, though themselves strangers to pain; and they take a generous interest in those events which are to consummate their blessedness. They wonder at the height of glory reserved for the re-deemed among men; and, completely free from envy, they desire to understand what is meant by "all things being put under their feet," and by men who have overcome through the blood of the Lamb, sitting down with him on his throne, as he, when he overcame, sat down on his Father's throne.

The practical use to be made of these truths it is not difficult to discover. If these things have been reported to us by men who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, surely we should believe them. And if we believed them—if we really believed them—O what an influence would they have on our temper and conduct! A faith of this truth would induce the man, who is yet uninterested in the Christian salvation, immediately to seek a share in its heavenly and spiritual blessings, and would make those who are interested in it very holy, very happy, very active, and perfectly contented amid all the calamities and trials of life.

What is the subject of the constant, intense contemplation of angels, surely deserves our most careful study. We are far more closely connected with, far more deeply interested in, the subject of study than they. The salvation

¹ Heb. i. 14; Ps. xxxiv. 7.

they desire to look into will promote, but it will but indirectly promote, their happiness. Their happiness may be secure without reference to it. But as to us, this salvation must be ours, or we are undone for ever and ever. It is *now* that an interest is to be obtained in it, if obtained at all. It is only by knowing and believing the truth about this salvation, that an interest in it can be obtained. Oh, then, let us with intensest ardour seek the knowledge of this salvation! If we die unacquainted with it, we die uninterested in it; and if we die uninterested in it, it never, never can become ours. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

NOTE A. p. 86.

Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα—the *till-Christ* sufferings.—Gal. iii. 24. Εἰς Χριστὸν = εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ.—Phil. i. 10. The view we have taken of the expression τ. ε. Χ. π. κ. τ. μ. τ. δ. is substantially that taken both by Luther and Calvin. Calvin's remark savours of his ordinary exegetical sagacity: "Non tractat Petrus quid Christo sit proprium, sed de universali ecclesiæ statu disserit." Le Clerc's note is good: "Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα intellexerit de piorum perpressionibus, Christi causa exantlandis: quas præviderant obscurius Prophetæ, et gloriam fidelium post sequuturam; sed quarum nescierunt tempora nisi quod revelatum eis est, ipsorum ævo eas non eventuras. Hæc egregie consentiunt cum serie orationis Petri qui loquitur de malis quibus religionis causa afficiebantur Christiani." Winer, though he does not adopt our exegesis, distinctly says that the expression before us is incorrectly taken for Τὰ Χριστοῦ παθήματα.—Gram. Part iii. sec. 30, p. 157. The Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα seem to denote the same thing as ἡ θλίψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of the Apocalypse, chap. i. 9, of which John represents himself and those to whom he wrote as *συγκοινωνοί*.

DISCOURSE V.

CHRISTIAN DUTY—MEANS OF, AND MOTIVES TO, ITS PERFORMANCE.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."—1 PEr. i. 18-21.

AMONG the numerous mistaken notions of Christianity which prevail among its professors, few are more common, and none more fatal, than that in which it is viewed merely as a theory—a system of abstract principles, which, however true, are but remotely connected with human interests; and which, therefore, can but feebly influence human character and conduct. It is but too evident that the grand characteristic doctrines of Christianity, such as the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, justification by faith, sanctification by divine influence, are, with many who readily admit their truth, and who would indeed be shocked at having their orthodoxy called in question, mere inoperative opinions, which exercise no more practical influence over

their temper and conduct than the philosophical doctrines respecting the nature of space and time, or the size and distance of the celestial bodies, or the historical facts respecting the victories of Alexander or the discoveries of Columbus.

It is painful to think that it is no uncommon thing for a person to be able to talk plausibly about these principles of Christianity, to reason conclusively in their support, and to be zealous even to rancour against those who deny, or even doubt, their truth; while he yet continues a total stranger to their transforming efficacy, the slave of selfishness, malignity, and worldliness. And what is the most lamentable part of this sad history, the infatuated man seems in a great measure unaware of the shocking inconsistency he is exhibiting, in displaying the most unchristian tempers in defence of Christian truth. He mistakes his knowledge and zeal about certain propositions—which, it may be, embody Christian truth—for Christianity itself; and looking, it would seem, on orthodoxy of opinion as the sum and substance of religious duty, wraps himself up in an overweening conception of his own attainments, and resigns himself to the pleasing dreams of a fancied security, from which but too frequently he is first and for ever awakened by hearing the awful mandate, "Depart from me, I never knew you;" and by finding his place assigned him with the hypocrites, in the regions of hopeless misery.

It is an interesting inquiry, and, if properly conducted, would certainly elicit some important results—How comes it that men, with the Bible in their hands, can practise such fatal impositions on themselves? How comes it that the mere speculator should so readily conclude himself a sound believer? How comes it that the truth of doctrines should not only be readily admitted, but zealously main-

tained, while their appropriate influence is altogether unfelt, and, indeed, steadily resisted? It would lead us too far out of our way just now to engage in such an inquiry; but I must be permitted to observe, that whatever influence deficient human representations of divine truth may have had in producing so mischievous and lamentable a result (and I believe that influence has been extensive and powerful), the truths of the gospel themselves, and the scriptural representation of them, cannot be justly charged as in any degree the cause of this evil. The doctrines of the gospel are of such a nature, that, if apprehended in their meaning and evidence,—if understood and believed,—they must, from the constitution of the mind of man, have a commanding influence over its principles of action; and these doctrines as taught in the Bible are not exhibited as mere abstract propositions, but are stated in such a manner as distinctly to show how closely the belief of them is connected with everything that is good in disposition and right in conduct. The speculatist in religion must not seek, for he will not find, in the Bible an apology for his infatuation and inconsistency. On the contrary, he will meet with much to prove him altogether inexcusable.

The principles of Christianity are never in the New Testament exhibited in an abstract systematic form. They are interwoven with the injunctions to the cultivation of right dispositions, and to the practice of commanded duties, to which in truth they form the most powerful motives. The Author of Revelation, who is also the Author of our nature, and who is intimately acquainted with all its intellectual and moral obliquities in its present fallen state, has mercifully and wisely led those "holy men who spoke as they were moved by his Spirit," to guard their readers against that tendency to consider the doctrines of Christianity as mere matters of speculation, to which we have

been adverting, by almost invariably following a statement of doctrine with a statement of the practical consequences which that doctrine, understood and believed, is at once calculated and intended to produce.

Of this we have a very striking and instructive exemplification in the passage which we have here chosen as the subject of this discourse. In the preceding paragraph we have a statement of some of the most sublime and delightful peculiarities of Christian doctrine. We are instructed respecting that state of ineffable purity, dignity, and happiness, to which it is the purpose of God ultimately to raise men, through the mediation of his incarnate Only-begotten. This state is described as "salvation;" deliverance from evil, in all its forms and degrees, for ever; a holy happiness, filling to an overflow all the capacities of enjoyment during the entire eternity of man's being; as "an *inheritance*," intimating at once the gratuitousness of the nature, and the security of the tenure, of this happiness; "an inheritance incorruptible," having nothing in its own nature which can lead to decay or termination—"undefiled," its pure elements unmingled with any inferior or heterogeneous ingredients—"unfading," retaining unimpaired its power to communicate happiness—"laid up in heaven," holy and ethereal in its nature, and secured beyond the reach of fraud or of violence; while those for whom it is destined—those who, according to the divine foreknowledge, have been selected by a spiritual separation from the world lying under the wicked one, that they may obey the truth, and be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, that is, possess the blessings secured by his atoning sacrifice—are preserved for its enjoyment amid all the dangers they are exposed to, by the power of God and through the instrumentality of believing.

Still further to illustrate the glories of this salvation,

this final state of blessedness, we are told, that unlike the present state, in which Jesus Christ is bodily absent from his chosen ones, and in which the imperfect knowledge they have of him is obtained entirely through the medium of believing, in which they are exposed to numerous and severe trials, in which complete deliverance from evil is the object of faith and hope, and in which, owing to these causes, they are often in heaviness, the future state of Christians is a state in which Christ Jesus is bodily present with them, and maintains intimate and uninterrupted intercourse with them,—a state in which nothing of their trials but their blissful and glorious results remain,—a state in which complete deliverance is the object of enjoyment,—a state in which, in consequence of all these things, they “rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory;” and as if even all this were not enough to give us just ideas of the glories and felicities “which God has laid up for those who love him,” we are told that this state of final happiness is a leading subject of Old Testament prophecy, apostolical preaching, and angelical study.

These delightful and wonderful announcements are not brought forward as abstract principles—things to speculate and to talk about. They are no sooner stated than the apostle proceeds to urge them on Christians as most powerful motives to the duties of their high and holy calling, and equally powerful supports and consolations under the afflictions to which the discharge of these duties might expose them. “Wherefore,” for these reasons, since these things are so—“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversa-

tion; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." In this admirable paragraph we have a most instructive view—I. Of Christian duty; II. Of the means of performing it; and III. Of the motives to its performance. Of **CHRISTIAN DUTY**—described first, generally, as obedience, Christians being exhorted to act "as obedient children," rather children of obedience; and then described more particularly—first negatively, "Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance;" and then positively—"Be holy in all manner of conversation." Of the **MEANS OF PERFORMING CHRISTIAN DUTY**: first, determined resolution—"Gird up the loins of your mind;" secondly, moderation in all our estimates, and desires, and pursuit of worldly objects—"Be sober;" thirdly, hope—"Hope to the end," hope perfectly; fourthly, fear—"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Of the **MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY**: first, the grandeur and excellence and security of the Christian inheritance, the full possession of which we can attain only by Christian obedience. "Wherefore," referring to the whole of the preceding description of the final state of happiness which awaits the saints; secondly, the holiness of God—"Be ye holy, for I am holy;" thirdly, the equity

of God—"The Father on whom we call, without respect of persons, judgeth every man according to his works;" and fourthly, the wonderful provision which had been made for securing this holiness, in their having been redeemed, or bought back to God, by the blood of his own Son—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

Such is the outline which I shall attempt to fill up in the subsequent illustrations.

I. CHRISTIAN DUTY.

§ 1. *General view—obedience.*

According to the plan which has just been sketched, our attention must be first directed to the view of Christian duty with which we are presented in the passage before us.

Christian duty is in this paragraph represented generally as obedience. The apostle calls on Christians to conduct themselves "as obedient children," or rather children of obedience, which is the literal rendering of the original terms. The apostle's meaning does not seem to be, "Behave yourselves towards God as obedient children do towards their father," but act the part not of children of disobedience—a strong idiomatic phrase for disobedient persons; but of children of obedience—a strong idiomatic phrase for

obedient persons.¹ Obedience, then, is the great duty of the Christian.

Obedience has always a reference to a law to be obeyed. Christians are often, in the epistolary part of the New Testament, represented as not only completely delivered from subjection to the law of Moses; but the state into which they are brought by the faith of the gospel is described as a being "not under law, but under grace."² Their pardon and salvation are not to be procured by their own obedience to any law, but to be received as the "gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But though delivered from the Mosaic law, and though "not under law," in the sense of their final salvation being the stipulated reward of stipulated labour, they are "not without law to God; they are under the law to Christ."³

The law to which the Christian owes obedience is the revelation of the divine will contained in the Holy Scriptures. This law is like its Author, "spiritual" and "holy," both "just and good."⁴ It reaches not merely to action, but to the principles of action, and requires obedience of *mind*, obedience of *heart*, and obedience of *life*.

Obedience of mind consists in the implicit belief of whatever is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It is counting true whatever God has said, just because God has said it. A Christian is not left to think as he pleases. The command of God is, "Let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."⁵ We must think in conformity to the mind of God, as made known in his word. We must

¹ *Τίνα ὑπακοῆς* is a Hebraism of the same kind as *τίνα φωνῆς, υἱοὶ ἡμῶν, υἱὸς ἀπωλείας, υἱοὶ ἀπειθείας, τίνα ἔργῃς, τίνα κατάρτας*. They who were *ἐκλεκτοὶ εἰς ὑπακοὴν* (i. 1, 2) ought to be *τίνα ὑπακοῆς*, and act *ὡς* accordingly.

² Rom. vi. 14.

⁴ Rom. vii. 12, 14.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 21.

⁵ Phil. ii. 5.

receive what is written there, "not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of the living God."¹

This submission of mind to the authority of God is the fundamental part of Christian obedience, and naturally leads to that obedience of heart which is equally required by that law, which is exceeding broad. By obedience of heart, I understand a state of the affections corresponding to the character of God as revealed in the manifestation he has made of his will. He appears in that manifestation infinitely venerable and estimable, and amiable and trustworthy; and reverence and esteem, and love and confidence, are the dispositions which these excellences ought to excite in our minds. To "sanctify the Lord God in our hearts," to "make him our fear and dread," to "love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind," and "to trust in him at all times,"² this is the obedience of the heart.

As the obedience of the mind naturally leads to the obedience of the heart, as it is impossible to venerate and esteem, and love and trust God, without knowing and believing that he is venerable and excellent, and amiable and trustworthy, and impossible to believe him possessed of those excellences without exercising those dispositions, so the obedience of the mind and of the heart naturally express themselves in the obedience of the life.

The obedience of the life is twofold—active and passive: the one consisting in conscientiously doing whatever God commands; and the other consisting in cheerfully submitting to whatever God appoints. It is the duty of the Christian to "walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless," to be "patient in tribulation," and even to "count it all joy when brought into manifold

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

² 1 Pet. iii. 15; Isa. viii. 13; Matt. xxii. 37; Ps. lxxii. 8.

trials.”¹ Such is the general idea of obedience as the duty of the Christian,—a conformity of mind and heart and conduct to the revealed will of God.

There are certain general characters which belong to this obedience when it is genuine, and which distinguish it from all counterfeits. It is *implicit* obedience. The Christian not only believes what God reveals, but he believes it because God has revealed it; he not only does what God commands, but he does it because God has commanded it; he not only submits to what God appoints, but he submits to it because God has appointed it. It is obviously just so far as the faith and conduct of a Christian have this character, that they deserve the name of obedience at all.

The obedience which forms the sum and substance of Christian duty, is *impartial* and *universal* obedience. If it be implicit, it will be impartial and universal. If I really regard the will of God at all, I will regard it whenever I see it clearly manifested. I will not, among duties commanded with equal clearness, choose which I will perform, and which I will neglect. I will “esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and I will hate every false way.”²

Cheerfulness is another essential character of Christian obedience. External obedience may often be constrained and mercenary; but the obedience of the life, which proceeds from and is the expression of the obedience of the mind and heart, cannot be either. In obeying, the Christian is doing what he knows to be right, and what he feels to be good. He “consents to the law that it is good.” He “delights in the law after the inward man.” When his heart is enlarged by just and impressive views of the reasonableness and excellence of the divine law, he runs

¹ Luke i. 6; Rom. xii. 12; James i. 2.

² Ps. cxix. 128.

in the ways of God's commandments, and finds that "in keeping them there is great reward."¹

The obedience which is the sum of the Christian's duty, in fine, is not an occasional and temporary, but a *habitual* and a *persevering* obedience. It is the business of his life: "Whatsoever he does, whether in word or in deed," ought to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." "Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatsoever he does," he ought to do "all to the glory of God." His obedience ought to be "a patient continuance in well-doing;" "a stedfast, unmoveable, constant abounding in the work of the Lord;" "a forgetting the things which are behind, a reaching forth to those which are before, a pressing to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."²

§ 2. *Particular view of Christian duty.* (1.) *Negative.*

(2.) *Positive.*

The duty of Christians is not only described generally as obedience, but more particularly, first negatively, as a "not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance," and then positively, as a "being holy in all manner of conversation." Let us shortly attend to these very instructive descriptions of Christian duty.

(1.) The apostle's negative statement is, that Christians ought not to fashion themselves "according to the former lusts in their ignorance." While a man continues unacquainted with the meaning and evidence of the revelation which God has made of himself in his word,—and this is the case with every unbeliever,—he is in a state of ignorance respecting the most important of all subjects, the

¹ Rom. vii. 16, 22; Ps. cxix. 32, xix. 11.

² Col. iii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 31; Rom. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Phil. iii. 13, 14.

character and will of God—the duty and happiness of man. While in that state, he does not “fashion himself,” that is, regulate his conduct, form his character, “according to the will of God,” but according to his “lusts”—his desires. The desires which are natural to men while they are unrenewed, are the principles which regulate their conduct and form their character. One man loves pleasure, another loves money, another loves power, another loves fame. The ruling desire, or lust, is the principle which forms the character and guides the conduct.

Now the Christian, being no longer in ignorance, but knowing and believing the revelation God has made of his will, must no longer permit his character to be fashioned by those desires, to the guidance of which, when in a state of ignorance, he delivered himself up. All these desires, so far as they are sinful, must be mortified; and even so far as they are innocent, they must cease to be governing principles, and must be subordinated to a higher principle—the principle of submission of mind and heart to the will of God.

The objects of these desires are sensible and present things—things which are “in the world;” so that the not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, and our not being “conformed to this world,” are but two different modes of expressing the same thing. An unregenerated man’s character is entirely formed by the desires of his fallen nature, excited by their appropriate objects in the present world. It was once so with the Christian, but it must be so with him no longer. On the contrary, “as he who has called him is holy, so must he be holy in all manner of conversation.”

(2.) This is the apostle’s positive statement with respect to Christian duty. There is no word, I apprehend, to which more indistinct ideas are generally attached, than

holiness; yet surely there is no word of the meaning of which it is of more importance we should have a clear and accurate conception; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."¹ The clearest and the justest idea we can form of holiness, as a quality of an intelligent creature, is conformity of mind and will with the Supreme Being, who alone is, in all the extent of meaning belonging to the word, holy. Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills. God's mind and will are to be known from his word; and, so far as I really understand and believe God's word, God's mind becomes my mind, God's will becomes my will, and, according to the measure of my faith, I become holy.

And this conformity of mind and will to God—this holiness—is to be manifested "in all manner of conversation." "Conversation" here, as usually in the New Testament, signifies not colloquial intercourse, but general conduct.² In every part of your character and conduct let it appear that the ruling principles of your conduct, the forming principles of your character, are no longer what they once were—your lusts, your natural desires,—but the mind and the will of him who has called you, even God, who is holy. His mind and will having become your mind and will through the knowledge and belief of the truth, make it evident that these are now the principles by which your character is formed and your life governed. In everything show that you think as God thinks, that you will as God wills, that you love what God loves, that you hate what he hates, that you choose what he chooses, that wherein he

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

² The only exception is Phil. iii. 20, where the word in the original is not ἀναστροφῆς, but πολίτευμα—citizenship.

finds enjoyment you seek enjoyment. Such is a short account of the Christian's duty.

There are two conclusions to which these observations necessarily conduct us, highly worthy of considerate reflection. First, that there are many who call themselves Christians who have no title to that name, habitual violators of God's law, strangers to the very principle of obedience, still "walking according to the course of this world," "serving divers lusts and pleasures."¹ How vain, how much worse than vain, is their profession—how dangerous their circumstances—how awful, if they continue in their present state, their final doom! The second conclusion is, that those who are really Christians are still very far indeed from being what they ought to be—from being what they might be. The best Christians, then, need to have such exhortations addressed to them as these: "Follow holiness," seek growing conformity of mind and heart to God, and recollect this can be obtained only by growing knowledge and faith of the truth. Though already not of the world, even as their Lord is not of the world, they need the great Intercessor continually to pray for them, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."²

II. MEANS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

We now proceed to direct your minds to the view here given us of the means of performing this duty. If we would be "children of obedience, not fashioning ourselves after our former lusts in our ignorance,"—if we would be "holy in all manner of conversation," it is necessary that we should "gird up the loins of our mind," that we should be "sober," that we should "hope to the end," and that we should "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."

¹ Eph. ii. 2, 3; Tit. iii. 3.

² John xvii. 17.

Determined resolution, moderation, hope, and fear, are the means here prescribed for our realizing, in our own character and conduct, those views of Christian duty presented to us by the apostle. Let us shortly attend to them in their order.

§ 1. *Determined resolution a means of Christian obedience.*

Determined resolution is one of the instrumental means which we ought to employ in order to our complying with the apostle's exhortation. "Gird up," says he, "the loins of your mind." The ancients were accustomed to wear loose, flowing garments, which, though graceful and agreeable on ordinary occasions, were found inconvenient when strenuous and long-continued exertion became necessary. In such cases it was usual to gather together the folds of the flowing drapery, and, having wrapped them round the waist, to confine them by a belt or girdle. This was termed girding up the loins.

The phrase is here used figuratively. To inquire, as some have done, what are meant by the loins of the mind, and to reply—the sensual affections and appetites, the lower propensities of human nature; and to inquire what is meant by girding up the loins of the mind, and to reply—the restraint and mortification of these debasing propensities, is rather ingeniously to play with, than satisfactorily to explain, the phraseology of the sacred writer. "To gird up the loins of the mind" is to gird up the loins mentally; that is, to cultivate that state of mind of which the girding up of the loins is the natural emblem. When a man has nothing to do, or nothing which requires anything like exertion, he permits his robes to flow in graceful negligence around him; or, even if called on to a sudden, transient, though vigorous effort, he may not think it worth his while to make any change in his dress; but if he has a work to

perform which requires at once strenuous and continued exertion,—if he is about, not to take a walk for pleasure, but to undertake a journey on business, then he girds up his loins. The action is naturally emblematical of that state of mind in which a person contemplates a course of conduct which, while he considers it as highly eligible and indispensably obligatory, he plainly perceives to involve in it serious difficulty, and to demand the persevering putting forth of all his active energies.¹

The apostolical command, “Gird up the loins of your mind,” is equivalent to “Set yourselves with resolute determination to the performance of these duties. Impress on your minds a sense of their importance, obligation, advantages, and necessity. Let there be no “halting between two opinions.” Considering Christian obedience as the business of life,—a business, the right discharge of which will require all the care you can devote to it,—a business, in the prosecution of which no exertion must be spared, no sacrifice grudged,—enter on it with a determination, that whatever may be neglected, this shall be attended to; and with a distinct understanding, that this is not to be an occasional employment for your by-hours, but the habitual occupation to which all your time and all your faculties are to be devoted.

Such a spirit of determined resolution is absolutely necessary to the proper performance of the duties involved in a life of Christian obedience. These duties are numerous, varied, and laborious. They are all in the highest degree reasonable; and to a being whose moral constitution is in a completely sound state, none of them would be in the slightest degree grievous. The yoke of Christian duty should be very easy—the burden of Christian duty should be very light. But who that believes the declarations of

¹ Ex. xii. 11; 1 Kings xviii. 46; Job xxxviii. 3, xl. 7; Luke xii. 35.

Scripture—who that is in any degree conversant with the realities of Christian experience, needs to be told that the remains of native depravity, acted on by the temptations of Satan, and by the influence of a world lying under his power, often make irksome what ought to be delightful, difficult what should be easy, laborious what should be spontaneous? How endless, varied, and diversified are the circumstances which have a tendency to induce spiritual sloth, and make us become “weary in well-doing!” How apt are we to turn out of the way, instead of proceeding right onwards; to loiter, when we should quicken our pace; to think we have “attained, and are already perfect,” when we have little more than entered on our Christian course! How often, when the spirit is willing, is the flesh weak! Oh how does “the flesh war against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would!”¹

To meet this state of things, nothing is more necessary than that resolute determination here recommended by the apostle. Without it we shall make but little progress in our Christian course, and the little progress we make will be productive of but little comfort to ourselves—little glory to our Lord; everything will be a difficulty; we shall be constantly stumbling, and but too often falling. But with it, our progress will be steady and rapid, delightful to ourselves, comfortable to our brethren, honourable to our Lord; we shall “forget the things which are behind, reach forward to those which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”²

This resolute determination must not rest on the mistaken opinion of our possessing in ourselves all the energies which are necessary for the successful performance of all the duties implied in Christian obedience, but on an humble

¹ Gal. v. 17.

² Phil. iii. 13.

yet confident reliance on the promises of God, securing for us all those supplies of divine influence which are requisite for this purpose. It is the faith of the truth, and that alone, that can brace the mind for spiritual work and warfare. It is this which makes us "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."¹

Let us, then, like the Israelites when leaving Egypt, "gird up our loins," resolved to prosecute our journey, undeterred by the fury of our spiritual enemies endeavouring to bring us again into bondage by the billows of the Red Sea of persecution, or by the endless toils and troubles of the wilderness of this world; till, having passed the Jordan of death, we shall lay by the staff and the sword for the palm and the harp, and exchange the humble garb of the pilgrim for the flowing robes of the victor. Meanwhile, to use the language of the heavenly Leighton, "let us remember our way, and where we are, and keep our robes girt up, for we walk among briars and thorns, which, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments; we walk through a world where there is a great mire of sinful pollutions, and which therefore cannot but defile them: and the crowd we are among will be ready to tread on them; yea, our own feet may be entangled in them, and so make us stumble and possibly fall." Our only safety is in girding up the loins of our mind.

§ 2. *Moderation a means of Christian obedience.*

Moderation is another of the instrumental means which the apostle recommends for the performance of the duty of Christian obedience. "Be sober."² To be sober, in

¹ Eph. vi. 10.

² Subsequent reflection has made me doubt whether "watchfulness" or freedom from mental intoxication be not the apostle's idea here, rather than moderation. The original word favours this view. These mental

ordinary language, is descriptive of that particular variety of the duty of temperance which is opposed to the undue use of intoxicating liquors. But the word used by the apostle has a much more extensive meaning. The sobriety or temperance of the apostle is another word for *moderation*, and is descriptive of that state of the mind and affections and behaviour in reference to "things seen and temporal," "the present world," by which a Christian should be distinguished.

The foundation of true Christian sobriety or moderation lies in a just estimate of the intrinsic and comparative value of "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,"¹—all that the eye or the flesh desires—all of which living men are apt to be proud. The Christian does not consider the wealth and the honour and the pleasures of this world as destitute of value; but he sees that that value is by no means what the deluded worshippers of Mammon suppose it to be. He sees that the possession of them cannot make him happy, nor the want of them make him miserable. They cannot obtain for him the pardon of his sin, they cannot pacify his conscience, they cannot transform his character, they cannot give him life in death, they cannot secure him of happiness for ever. They appear to him polluted with sin, replete with temptation, pregnant of danger.

With these views, he is moderate in his desires for them, moderate in his pursuit of them, moderate in his attachment to them while he enjoys them, moderate in his regrets for them when he is deprived of them. This is Christian sobriety. It is for those who have earthly relatives to be as

habits are described, Discourses xviii. xxiii. ; and the usefulness, and indeed necessity, of them as instrumental means for the performance of Christian duty are self-evident.

¹ 1 John ii. 6.

if they had them not; for "those who weep to be as though they wept not; for those who rejoice to be as though they rejoiced not; for those who use this world to use it as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away."¹

The cultivation of this sobriety is of the utmost importance to the proper performance of the duties of Christian obedience. The supreme love of the world is inconsistent with Christian obedience altogether. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon."² And as the supreme love of the world necessarily makes and keeps men "children of disobedience," so the undue love of the world prevents even those who are "the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus" from being, in so high a degree as they ought to be, "the children of obedience." What is it that makes obedience so often to be felt a tiresome task, but the undue love of the world; and how do the commandments of our Lord become to us "not grievous," but by our victorious faith overcoming the world?³ It has been finely said, that "the same eye cannot both look up to heaven and down to earth at the same time." And the heart must be emptied of the love of the world, that it may be filled with that love of God which is at once the seminal principle and the concentrated essence of all Christian obedience. Those who are quite engrossed with earth's business and pleasures cannot be "seeking a country—a better country, that is, an heavenly." They who, by their immoderate attachment to earth, show they are at home, cannot be "strangers and sojourners." The Captain of the Lord's host, our New Testament Gideon, will not own as his soldiers those who lie down to drink of the streams of earth's delight, but only

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

² Matt. vi. 24.

³ 1 John v. 4.

those who, in passing, drink of them with their hand, as of the brook in the way.¹

It is much to be desired that professors of Christianity were more deeply impressed with this truth,—that the supreme love of the world is utterly inconsistent with the very existence of Christianity; and that real Christians were more deeply impressed with the kindred truth, of the utter inconsistency of an undue love of the world with a healthy thriving Christianity, a Christianity bringing forth the fruits of true holiness and true peace,—fruits which are to the glory of God, and to the happiness of the believer. It is, my brethren, this worldliness, this want of Christian sobriety, which spreads such a withering blight over the blossoms of fair profession, and prevents their ever ripening into fruit. To quote again the spiritual commentator already referred to: “All immoderate use of the world and its delights injures the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapours, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul.”² If we would, then, be children of obedience, if we would not fashion ourselves according to the former lusts, if we would be holy in all manner of conversation, let us “be sober.”

Let each of us, ere we proceed further, examine himself. Am I girding up the loins of my mind? Am I, in a dependence on the promised aids of divine influence, honestly, heartily determined to make the service of God, through Christ Jesus, my great business, and to make the life I live in the flesh a life of subjection to his will, and obedience to his law, by making it a life of faith in his Son? Am I sober, temperate, moderate in all things, in my estimates,

¹ Leighton. Heb. xi. 13, 14; Judg. vii. 4-7.

² Leighton.

my desires, my pursuits, my enjoyments, my sorrows? If we are not girding up the loins of our minds, if we are not sober, we are not Christians. We may be calling Christ Lord, Lord; but we are not doing the things which he says to us; and unless a thorough change take place, to us at last must be addressed these heart-withering words—"Depart from me, I never knew you, ye that work iniquity."

§ 3. *Hope a means of Christian obedience.*

We proceed now to observe, that Hope is the third means recommended by the apostle for securing the proper performance of the duty of Christian obedience. If you would be "children of obedience," if you would "not fashion yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," if you would "be holy in all manner of conversation," you must "hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The grace," or favour, "which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Christ Jesus," that is, when Christ Jesus is revealed, is that perfection of holy happiness to which they are to be raised at the close of the present state of things—"the salvation that is ready," prepared, "to be revealed in the last time"—"the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them"—"the glory that is to follow" the second coming of the Lord.

For this "grace," this manifestation of his sovereign favour,—for the salvation of Christ from the beginning to the end is of grace,—the apostle exhorts Christians to "hope," and to "hope to the end."

He exhorts them to hope for it, to expect it, to consider it as something that is absolutely secure, something that in due season they shall certainly enjoy; and he exhorts them

to "hope to the end,"¹—that is, either to hope perfectly, to cherish an undoubting confidence, or to persevere in hoping to the very close of life, "not casting away their confidence," but "holding it fast to the end," knowing that "they have need of patience," that is, "the patience of hope;" in other words, knowing that they must persevere in hoping, in order that they may do the will of God, and that "they may obtain the promise," that is, the promised blessing.²

The practical truths here taught by the apostle are these—that it is the duty of Christians to cultivate a persevering confident hope of final salvation; and that the cultivation of this persevering confident hope of final salvation, is a necessary and important means of enabling them to perform the duties of Christian obedience.

(1.) That it is the duty of Christians, believers of the truth as it is in Jesus, to cherish the hope of eternal happiness, is exceedingly plain. God has distinctly stated, that "whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life;" and surely it must be the duty of the Christian to believe what God says, and to expect what God has promised.³ For an unbelieving and impenitent person, continuing in unbelief and impenitence, to hope for eternal life, is the extreme of presumption. That were to believe something which God has never said; that were to expect something which God has never promised. Nay, that were to believe the reverse of what God says—to expect the reverse of what God has declared. His declarations are, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." "He that believeth not, shall be damned."⁴ The unbeliever who is cherishing the hope of "*grace* to be brought" to him, continuing an unbeliever "at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"

¹ *τελούς*.

³ John iii. 16.

² Heb. x. 35, 36.

⁴ Luke xiii. 3, 5; Mark xvi. 16.

is trusting to a hope which will make him "ashamed and confounded world without end." For He will then be "revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹

But let this impenitent man change his mind; let this unbeliever but credit the testimony of God, counting it a faithful saying, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin in our room, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him,"²—and immediately that hope which, in his previous state, it would have been absurdity and error, folly and presumption, in him to cherish, naturally grows up in his mind; its enjoyment is one of his highest privileges, and its cultivation one of his most important duties.

When we call on Christians to cultivate hope, we would press upon their attention the importance of three things. First, let them endeavour to obtain clear and ever-extending views of that holy happiness which is the object of their hope, of that "grace which is to be brought to them at the coming of our Lord Jesus." Let them not rest satisfied with some indistinct general notion of it as a state of deliverance from all suffering, and of the enjoyment of every species of blessedness; but let its character as a state of holy happiness be familiar to their minds,—a state of endearing and transforming communion with the Holy, Holy, Holy One,—a seeing Him as he is, a being like him, a beholding his face in righteousness, a being satisfied with his likeness, a being holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect.

Secondly, let them never forget that the only ground on which their hope of obtaining this blessedness rests, is the sovereign mercy of Him whose nature as well as name is

¹ 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

² 2 Cor. v. 19-21.

love, exercised in perfect consistency with, in glorious illustration of his righteousness, through the obedience to death of his only-begotten Son, made known to them in the word of the truth of the gospel. That appeared to them the only ground of hope, when, in the hour of conviction, every "refuge of lies" was swept away, and they were made to see that, so far as depended on themselves, so far as depended on the universe of creatures, there was no hope for them. They were then absolutely "without hope" till "the hope set before them in the gospel" was disclosed to their mind. There is no other ground of hope. Never, Christians, shift from this foundation—never attempt to add to this foundation. "Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast to the end." Let your hope of eternal life be that of a sinner who knows that eternal death is his merited portion, but who, believing, because God has said it, that "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," gladly and gratefully receives what is freely given him of God, and setting "to his seal that God is true," confidently trusts, humbly expects, that God will do as he has said.

Thirdly, in hoping for this holy happiness entirely on the ground of sovereign mercy, let Christians expect to obtain it only in the way in which God has promised to bestow it on them. To expect eternal life in a course of thoughtlessness and sin, is to expect what God has never promised. It is "through faith and patience" that the promised blessing is to be inherited. It is "in a patient continuance in well-doing," that "glory, honour, and immortality" are to be expected. It is "after doing the will of God that we are to receive the promise."¹ Let Christians, keeping these three things in view, expect only what God has promised—expect this only on the ground, that He who is infinite in kindness, and wisdom, and power, and

¹ Rom. ii. 7; Heb. vi. 12, x. 36.

faithfulness, has promised it—and expect it only in the way and by the means which he has appointed for obtaining it; and it is impossible for them to be too confident in that “hope for the grace which is to be brought to them at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(2.) This confident persevering hope of final salvation is one of the most necessary and important means for enabling a Christian to perform the duties of Christian obedience. There are some theologians who would represent the performance of the duties of Christian obedience as the ground of the hope of eternal life. These are not wise builders. They turn things upside down, and place the superstructure in the room of the foundation. Till a man has, through the faith of the gospel, obtained the hope of eternal life, he will never take a step in that path of filial obedience which is the only road to heaven; and the more he has of a well-grounded hope of eternal life, the more rapidly will he run along that road,—the more easily will he master the difficulties and surmount the obstacles which threaten to prevent his progress. When by a lively hope the Christian is enabled to feast on the clusters of the grapes of the promised land, which faith has furnished him with in the wilderness, he is disposed to say with Caleb, ‘It must be a good land; and seeing it is a good land, let us go up and possess it. What though hosts of spiritual enemies oppose our progress; what though the Jordan of death, that river over which there is no bridge, roll his waters deep and dark between us and the Canaan above: He who is infinite in power and in faithfulness hath promised to make us “more than conquerors,” and to bring us to, and make us reside for ever in, that good land.’

“It is,” to borrow the well-considered language of Leighton, “a foolish misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of divine grace, to

imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin. Our apostle is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves: he apprehends no such matter: he, indeed, supposes the contrary as unquestionable: he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies, but joins them as near friends. Hope perfectly, in order to your being holy in all manner of conversation. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness—the more delight in it, the more study of it, as the only way to that end; and as labour is then most pleasant when we are made surest that it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this oil of gladness, this assured hope of glory." Accordingly, the Apostle John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." In perfect accordance with these two apostles, their beloved brother Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, declares his desire "that every one of them would show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end;" would sedulously cultivate an unshaken, confident, persevering hope of eternal life, in order that they might not be "slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises."¹

This is, I am persuaded, the only way of securing habitual Christian obedience. Let the Christian, then, learn to say with the Psalmist, "But I will hope continually; and I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only."²

It may be proper, before leaving this part of the subject, to remark, that as the hope of eternal life has a powerful influence on Christian obedience, so Christian obedience

¹ 1 John iii. 2, 3; Heb. vi. 11, 12.

² Ps. lxxi. 14-16.

has a powerful influence on the hope of eternal life. We have seen that Christian obedience is not the ground of the hope of eternal life, but it is its evidence. It is in the nature of things impossible that a Christian, while negligent about the duty of obedience, should enjoy in any high degree the privilege of hope. It is the same truth which inspires hope and stimulates to obedience; and if it is not present to the mind doing the latter, it cannot be present doing the former. It has been finely said, "The greatest affliction does not damp the hope of eternal life so much as the smallest sin; affliction often renders hope more vigorous, sin uniformly weakens it."¹ If Christians would be "obedient children," they must "hope to the end;" and if they would "hope to the end," they must be "obedient children." These two things are linked together by divine appointment; "and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

§ 4. *Fear a means of Christian obedience.*

Fear is the fourth and last instrumental means which the apostle prescribes for securing the performance of the duties of Christian obedience. If we would be "children of obedience," if we would not "fashion ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance," if we would "be holy in all manner of conversation," then must we "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."

This injunction may not at first view appear to harmonize well with that which we have just been illustrating. It may be said, "Does not perfect love cast out fear?"² and must not "the full assurance of hope," which the apostle has been recommending, cast it out also? The discrepancy is apparent only, not real. The fear which the apostle recommends, so far from being inconsistent with love and

¹ Leighton.

² 1 John iv. 18.

hope, and destructive of that comfort and happiness to which they give origin, naturally grows out of those views of the divine character which excite love and hope, and acts the part of guardian to the comfort and happiness which they produce in the mind.

The fear recommended by the apostle is beyond doubt the fear of offending God, and of the consequences of offending God. Such a fear is not only consistent with love and hope, but is their inseparable companion. The more highly I value the favour of God, the more must I fear that which, in the degree in which it prevails, deprives me of the sense of this favour. The more I delight in the anticipation of the holy happiness of heaven, the more must I be afraid of that, the direct and certain effect of which is to deprive me of this delight. The happiness of Christians is in the love of God, and the light of his countenance is the life of their life. It matters little to them that the world frowns on them, if he smiles; and it matters little to them that the world smiles, if he frowns. Nothing in the world can deprive them of the tokens of their Father's love but sin; and therefore they consider it as of all things the most terrible. By this fear of the Lord they are made to depart from evil. It is implanted in their hearts by God for this express purpose: "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me."¹ It naturally leads them to keep at a distance from sin; to guard against temptation; to beware of what may lead to the interruption of their delightful communion with their reconciled Father, and involve in clouds of perplexity and doubt the prospect of future blessedness. "Happy is the man who *thus* feareth always."² When a Christian believer thinks of the remains of corrupt principle within, and the number and force of temptations without; when he sees how many fall before

¹ Prov. xvi. 6; Jer. xxxii. 40.

² Prov. xxviii. 14.

these temptations, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, surely it must be good for him to "be not high-minded, but fear."¹

There is a system which passes with many for a peculiarly pure Christianity, the object of which seems to be to set believers free from every species of fear as inconsistent with faith, which, according to them, consists in believing that at all events the individual shall be saved. Every species of fear is run down under the name of unbelief. Now it is quite plain the apostles had a very different view of the subject, since Paul exhorts the Hebrew Christians to "fear, lest, a promise of entering into God's rest being left to them, any of them should seem to come short of it;"² and since Peter, in the words of our text, exhorts Christians to "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear." They inculcate fear as a means of preventing unbelief and its consequences.

It is justly remarked by a judicious divine,³ that both "believers and unbelievers have their fears; but they arise from very different sources, and have quite opposite effects. The fears of unbelievers arise from unworthy thoughts of God; a distrust of his power, faithfulness, and goodness; and also from a prevailing love of the present world and its enjoyments, which makes them more afraid of worldly losses and sufferings for righteousness' sake, than of forfeiting the divine favour," or incurring the divine displeasure. "Such fears not only indispose the mind to obedience, but lead directly to sin. But that godly fear which is proper to believers, arises from a just view, reverence, and esteem

¹ Rom. xi. 20.

² Heb. iv. 1.

³ The late Archibald M'Lean, from whose writings I have derived much advantage. It may be worth stating, that when introduced to the late Robert Hall, one of the first things he said to me was, "Sir, you have found me reading your countryman, Archibald M'Lean. He was a man mighty in the Scriptures, sir; mighty in the Scriptures."

of the character of God, and a supreme desire of his favour, as their chief happiness; and is a fear lest they offend him, and incur his just displeasure. Such a fear outweighs all the allurements of sin on the one hand, and all the terrors of present sufferings on the other."

Such is the fear inculcated by the prophet when he says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and let him be your fear and your dread, and he shall be for a sanctuary." Such is the fear enjoined by our Lord on his disciples: "Fear not him who, after he has killed the body, hath no more that he can do; but fear him who, after he hath killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell fire; yea, I say unto you, fear him."¹ Such is the fear prescribed by the apostle in the passage before us, as an instrumental means for securing Christian obedience: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

This fear must be habitually exercised during the whole continuance of our mortal life. None are so highly advanced in grace here below, as to be out of the need of this principle; but when their pilgrimage is finished, and they are come home to their Father's house above, there shall be no more fearing. There are no dangers there, and therefore no fear. They shall indeed have, in a higher degree than ever, a holy reverence of the Divine Majesty; but the fear of offending God will pass away with the possibility of offending him. In that blessed world there is neither sin, nor temptation to sin; no more conflict, no more danger: the victory is complete, the peace secure, the triumph eternal.²

These observations have been addressed exclusively to Christians. But I am afraid there are persons now hearing me who are not Christians. I call on them to fear; they have good reason: I dare not call on them to hope, while

¹ Isa. viii. 13; Matt. x. 28.

² Leighton.

they continue in unbelief and impenitence. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God,"¹—no hope for the unbelieving. But I present to them "the hope set before us" in the gospel. I tell them, Christ Jesus died for sinners; for the chief of sinners. I assure them that "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." I put them in mind of the solemn oath of God, that he has no pleasure in their death; I put them in mind of the most condescending expostulation, "Why, why, will ye die?" I beseech them to despair of salvation in themselves; I assure them that Jesus is "able to save them to the uttermost," and as willing as able.² Oh, if they would but believe "these true and faithful sayings of God," a hope that will never make them ashamed would spring up in their hearts; and, along with that fear of the Lord by which men depart from evil, a fear in which there is sweet awful pleasure, not torment, in delightful harmonious operation, would induce them, from "children of disobedience," to become children of obedience; and instead of continuing to "fashion themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance," would lead them to "be holy in all manner of conversation."

III. MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

Let us now illustrate the motives to Christian duty, which are unfolded in the paragraph under consideration. These are four in number. (1.) The grandeur, excellence, and security of that inheritance, the full possession of which can be attained only in a course of Christian duty: "Wherefore," says the apostle, referring to the whole of the preceding description of the final happiness which awaits Christians at the second coming of their Lord. (2.) The

¹ Isa. lvii. 21.

² Rom. vi. 23; Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

holiness of God : " Be ye holy, for I am holy." (3.) The equity of God : " The Father on whom ye call, or he whom ye call Father, judgeth every man according to his works." And (4.) The provision made for sanctification, by the sacrifice of the Son of God : " Ye are redeemed, not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Let me turn your attention to these most powerful motives in their order.

§ 1. *The grandeur, excellence, and security of the Christian salvation, a motive to Christian duty.*

The grandeur, excellence, and security of the inheritance, the full possession of which can be attained only in a course of Christian duty, is a most powerful motive to obedience, and to the employment of all the means which are fitted to secure it. When the apostle says, " Wherefore," for these reasons, we naturally ask, For what reasons? And we readily find an answer. The preceding context is principally occupied with a description of the final happiness, the eternity of holy blessedness, which awaits the genuine followers of Jesus Christ in the last time, at the revelation of the Saviour.

Now, is not the attainment of this eternity of holy happiness well worthy of every exertion that man is capable of?—will it not infinitely more than compensate for privations however great, sacrifices however costly, sufferings however severe, that may be required in pursuing it? When we look around us, and see "all things so full of

labour, that man cannot utter it;" when we see men, in order to obtain some worldly advantage, the value of which is in a great measure imaginary, and the possession of which must be insecure and short-lived, rising early, sitting late, eating the bread of carefulness, compassing sea and land, straining to the utmost every faculty of exertion, and tasking to the utmost every power of endurance, we cannot help being painfully struck at the disproportion between the worthlessness of the object, and the multitude and mightiness of the means. It "resembles ocean into tempest tost, to waft a feather or to drown a fly." We feel disposed to ask the infatuated labourer, "Wilt thou set thine heart on things which are not?" "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"¹

But there is no such disproportion here. "The crown of righteousness," "the crown of life," is an adequate, ay, infinitely more than an adequate, reward for all the toils, and privations, and fatigues, and agonies, of the Christian race and warfare; and all the sufferings of the present state, to which a Christian may be exposed in the cause of his religion, are not "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;" the afflictions of the present state, however numerous and severe, are lighter than dust in the balance, when weighed against that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."²

Is not this calculated to arouse to active exertion, to prepare for patient suffering? Is it not most reasonable, that, in prosecuting such a pursuit, our determination to do nothing that can hazard failure, and everything that can promote success, should be most resolute, and that we should look away from everything, however otherwise attractive, which is calculated to divert our attention or

¹ Prov. xxiii. 5; Isa. lv. 2.

² Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

divide our affections? Is not the attainment of such a blessing a fit object of hope? Is not the loss of such a blessing a fit object of fear?

But it may be said, Is not the "salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory," "the gift of God;" and is it not "sure to all the seed?" Is it not "laid up for *them* in heaven?" and are *they* not kept for it by the mighty power of God?¹ What need, then, of all this obedience and submission? What need of all this determined resolution, and self-denied moderation, and animating hope, and cautious fear? The answer to those questions is at hand, and it is brief and satisfactory. The final salvation is the gift of God, and the objects of his love shall assuredly not come short of it. But there is a divinely appointed method for obtaining that eternal life which is the gift of God; and none can enjoy the well-grounded hope of possessing it, who do not seek it in this divinely appointed method. Nothing is more distinctly stated in Scripture than that it is only in the way of persevering faith and holiness that heaven is to be expected; and that, in the way of persevering faith and holiness, heaven cannot be too confidently expected. It is in the way of persevering faith and holiness alone that we can reach heaven. "We have need of patience," that is, we must persevere, "that, by the will of God, we may obtain the promised blessing." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."² Unbelief and disobedience are the road to hell; and even a true Christian, when, under the influence of the evil heart of unbelief, he falls into backsliding, may be justly said to be on the road to hell, though, blessed be God, it is certain he will never reach the termination of that road: for the prayer of his Redeemer, who is mighty, will prevent his faith from utterly failing, and his backslidings will be healed; and he

¹ Rom. vi. 23, iv. 16.

² Heb. x. 36, xii. 14.

will be made to retrace his steps, and walk onward in faith and holiness towards heaven.

Still it is a general truth which all should attend to, "He that lives after the flesh shall die." "He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." He that turns back, "turns back towards perdition."¹ On the other hand, nothing is more certain than that, in a persevering course of Christian faith and obedience, the celestial blessedness in all its grandeur and excellence shall be realized. "He who, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, shall live." He who, "through a patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality, shall obtain eternal life." He who "endureth to the end, shall be saved." He who perseveres in believing, shall obtain "the salvation of the soul." He who "adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity;" he who doeth these things "shall never fall, but thus an entrance shall be ministered to him abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."² The attainment of the celestial blessedness in this way is not merely a high probability—even in this case the motive would be a powerful one—it is an absolute certainty. It is as secure as the word and oath, the perfections and being of God, can make it.

How well fitted are such considerations to repress weariness, to rekindle ardour in the Christian race! "I run not as uncertainly," I keep along the marked race-course, and I am sure of "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." How admirably calculated to revive fainting courage in the Christian conflict! "I fight not as

¹ Rom. viii. 13; Gal. vi. 8; Heb. x. 39. *Εἰς ἀπώλειαν.*

² Rom. viii. 13, ii. 7; Matt. x. 22; Heb. x. 39; 2 Pet. i. 5-11.

one that beateth the air." I know that, "waxing valiant in fight, I shall put to flight all the armies of the aliens." "I know in whom I have believed."¹ Continuing to "fight the good fight of faith," I shall be "more than a conqueror through him that loved me." The men of the world, in prosecution of their fancied good, spare no pains, shrink from no difficulty, decline no hazard, though they have nothing but probability, often a very weak probability, to excite and encourage them. How unnatural, how inexcusable, on the part of those professing to believe the gospel revelation, to be careless and inactive in the pursuit of a happiness which "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and which hath never entered into the heart of man;" and of the attainment of which in the appointed manner, we may be, we ought to be, as certain as we are of our own existence! Well might the apostle, when his mind was warmed and elevated by the contemplation of the glories of the final deliverance, say, "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end; and be obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*"

This is the effect which the believing contemplation of the heavenly blessedness is calculated and intended to have on the mind. It is not intended to afford an indolent delight, but a powerful excitement, and to induce Christians to be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as they know that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

§ 2. *The holiness of God a motive to Christian duty.*

The second motive which the apostle presents to the mind as urging to Christian obedience, is the holiness of the

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 36; Phil. iii. 14; 2 Tim. i. 12.

Divine Being: "Be holy in all manner of conversation, as he who has called you is holy; as it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

There is none holy as Jehovah. He is "glorious in holiness." "He" only "is holy;" "holy and reverend" is His name.¹ And those intelligent beings, who are capable of apprehending most of the perfections and beauties of his uncreated nature, have their attention chiefly fixed by this lovely attribute, and "day without night" hymn his praises as the "holy, holy, holy" One.² The holiness of God is just another word for the moral perfection of his nature. It is not something different from justice and benignity. It is the absolute perfection and the harmonious union of justice and benignity.

The sum of the Christian's duty is to be holy, that is, to be conformed to God,—to have the same views, and judgments, and sentiments with him,—to approve what he approves,—to disapprove what he disapproves; and the strongest and best reason why the Christian should have these views, and judgments, and sentiments, and likings and dislikings, is just because God has them. The strongest and best reason why he should thus think and thus will, is just that God thus thinks and thus wills. To be holy, is to be conformed to God; and to be conformed to God, is at once man's highest honour, duty, and happiness. And what more cogent reason can be given for following any tenor of disposition and conduct, than that it is "the whole of man,"³—the whole of his honour, his duty, and his happiness?

The Divine Being is the most glorious and venerable being in the universe; and it is his holiness far more than his power or his wisdom, far more than his eternity or his

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 2; Ex. xv. 21; Ps. xcix. 5, cxi. 9.

² Isa. vi. 3.

³ Eccles. xii. 13.

immensity, or his immutability, that makes him so. His other perfections, separate from this, would make him an object of terror rather than of veneration. He is emphatically "glorious in holiness;" and it is this perfection which clothes all the others with moral attractive influence, and makes their possessor at once infinitely estimable and infinitely lovely. When an intelligent being bears no resemblance to God in moral excellence, there is in that being nothing really dignified and honourable—no proper cause of moral respect or approbation; and just in the degree in which there is a resemblance, is that intelligent being a fit object of moral esteem—honourable and honoured by God and all right-thinking angels and men. This, then, is one portion of the force of the motive, "Be holy, for I am holy." Be holy; for to be holy is to be conformed to God, and to be conformed to God is true honour.

But there is more in it than this. To be conformed to God is man's highest duty. To think in opposition to God, to will in opposition to God, must surely be the most unnatural and wicked of all things in beings capable of thinking and willing; and to think along with him, to will along with him, must from the very nature of things be their first and highest duty. To have the mind and will and active faculties in perfect accordance with the mind and will and command of God, is the clearest conception we can form of the moral perfection of an intelligent creature.

But even this is not all. To be conformed to God is man's truest, highest happiness. God is the happiest being in the universe; and the reason is, he is the holiest being in the universe. He is perfectly happy, for he is perfectly holy. Men cannot participate in the happiness of God, but by becoming "partakers of his holiness." God himself cannot make a being like man really, permanently happy

in any other way than by making him holy. "They who are far from him shall perish;" and there is nothing so good for man, in all the extent and emphasis of meaning which belongs to the word "good," as the being "near to God."¹ The force of this motive, then, briefly expressed, is this: 'To perform Christian duty, to be obedient children, is to be holy; and to be holy is to be like God; and to be like God is man's highest honour, duty, and happiness.' Surely he must be an obtuse-minded, he must be an obdurate-hearted, man who does not perceive, who does not feel, the overwhelming force of such a motive.

There is a superadded force in the motive, as urged in the passage before us. There is an additional power of persuasion in the descriptive appellation by which, instead of one of his proper names, the Divine Being is in this passage spoken of: As "he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." When they were running the mad career of error and folly and sin, God's powerful voice reached their hearts, and "called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." 'When that holy One called you, it was for a purpose consonant with his character. That calling was "a holy calling;" he called you "not to uncleanness, but to holiness." He has chosen you, "that you might be holy, and without blame before him in love."'² To use the words of holy Leighton, "He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for himself; he hath set you apart for the end that you may be holy to him. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply to any profane use those whom God has consecrated to himself. He who hath called you is holy; and therefore, when he called you, it

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

² 1 Pet. ii. 9; 2 Tim. i. 9; 1 Thess. iv. 7; Eph. i. 4.

must have been that ye should be holy. Therefore 'be ye holy.'"

§ 3. *The strict equity of God a motive to Christian duty.*

The strict equity of God is the third motive brought forward by the apostle for urging Christians to obedience, and to the use of the means calculated to facilitate and secure obedience. "Be obedient children; fashion not yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; be holy in all manner of conversation; gird up the loins of your mind; be sober; hope to the end; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;" "since the Father on whom ye call," or rather, "since He whom ye call Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work."¹

The primary idea here plainly is, that the strict impartiality of God, as the moral governor of the world, should be felt as a powerful motive to Christian duty. This consideration is urged as a motive to that holy fear which we have seen to be one of the great means of Christian obedience; but it is also a powerful direct motive to Christian duty in general.

God is the moral governor of the world. "The Lord hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge the world in righteousness." "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." Every human being is the subject of this government. All must stand before his tribunal. He judgeth every man, and every work of every man: "for God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."²

In the administration of this moral government, God is

¹ "Particula *si* non est conditionalis sed assertiva, non dubitantis, sed rem notam presupponentis—quia patrem invocatis."—CALVIN. Others render it "quandoquidem," or "quoniam." HOTTINGER. ROSENMÜLLER.

² Ps. ix. 7, ciii. 19; Eccles. xi. 9.

in any other way than by making him holy. "They who are far from him shall perish;" and there is nothing so good for man, in all the extent and emphasis of meaning which belongs to the word "good," as the being "near to God."¹ The force of this motive, then, briefly expressed, is this: 'To perform Christian duty, to be obedient children, is to be holy; and to be holy is to be like God; and to be like God is man's highest honour, duty, and happiness.' Surely he must be an obtuse-minded, he must be an obdurate-hearted, man who does not perceive, who does not feel, the overwhelming force of such a motive.

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¹ Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

² 1 Pet. ii. 9; 2 Tim.

but unto them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." "God," says he in another passage, "accepteth no man's person." "There is no respect of persons with him."¹

This strict impartiality of the Divine Being, as the righteous judge, is a very powerful motive to the duties enjoined, whether the injunction be considered as addressed to *professed* Christians or to *real* Christians. Let us endeavour to unfold its force, as bearing respectively on these two classes.

Viewed as addressed to professors of Christianity, it is as if the apostle had said, 'A mere profession of Christianity will avail you nothing. It is to no purpose that you have been baptized in the name of Christ, that you have a place in his Church, that you sit down at his table, that you perform the external acts of worship which he requires, if you are not "obedient children." If you are not "renewed in the spirit of your mind," if you are "not transformed by the renewing of your mind," so as not "to be conformed to the world;" if you are not "holy in all manner of conversation," if you are not perseveringly active in the performance of Christian duty, if you are not moderate in all things, if you have not the hope of eternal life, and are not in the fear of the Lord all the day long, it is madness in you to think that you are in the way of obtaining "the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." Remember with whom you have to do. He is not capable of being imposed on by external

¹ Deut. x. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxiv. 10-12, 19; Acts x. 34, 35; Rom. ii. 5-12; Gal. ii. 6; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25.

appearances. He is not capable of being biassed by weak partialities. He will judge you, and judge you according to your works. You will find that the principle on which his decisions go is the plain one: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that doeth not righteousness is not righteous." You will find that within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem there is room only for those who do his commandments; and that "without," "in outer darkness," is the allotted everlasting habitation of "the hypocrite," as well as "the unbeliever," and the unprofitable and unfaithful servant. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven."¹

The ultimate destiny of the worldly immoral professor of Christianity will be more dreadful than that of the heathen or the open infidel. O that sinners in Zion were afraid! O that fearfulness might surprise the hypocrites! The God of whom you say that he is your God, is no respecter of persons; he will judge you according to your works. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for if ye sow to the flesh, of the flesh ye shall reap corruption; but if ye sow to the Spirit, ye shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."² "You profess the true religion, and call him Father; but if you live devoid of his fear, and be disobedient children, he will not spare

¹ 1 John iii. 7, 10; Matt. xxiv. 51, vii. 21.

² 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. vi. 7, 8; Rom. viii. 13.

you on account of that relation, but rather punish you more severely, because you pretended to be his children, and yet were not.”¹ Beware of supposing that a life of irreligion and immorality, or even a life of indolence, or of worldliness, under a Christian profession, can have any end but one—redoubled damnation. How can it be otherwise, if he with whom you have to do, “without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work?” How fearful is the situation of that man who can hope for impunity and salvation, only if the righteous Lord shall cease to judge righteously! Such is the force of the motive viewed as addressed to professors of Christianity—who may be, many of whom are, false professors.

Let us now look at the motive as it bears on those who are really Christians. While “eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” while “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” is freely bestowed on, not purchased by, those who obtain it; yet it is plainly the doctrine of Scripture, as it appears to me, that the degrees of happiness in a future world will be proportioned to the degrees of holiness in the present world. In judging of the works of the redeemed, strict impartiality will be maintained. To use the figurative language of our Lord, one shall have authority over ten cities, and another shall have authority over five; or, to adopt the plainer terms of his apostle, “Let every man prove his own work, for every man must bear his own burden.” The apostle, as a motive to Christian duty, assures the Hebrews that “God is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love;” and the righteous Judge, who will give the crown of righteousness to all who love his appearing, proclaims: “Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

¹ Leighton.

When Christians stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, they will "receive the things done in the body, according to what they have done." If any man's work, any Christian man's, abides after the great trial which it must then undergo, he shall obtain a reward. If any man's work do not abide when tried, he shall suffer comparative loss, though he himself "be saved." There will be a difference, ay, and an important one, between those Christians who have added to their "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity; who have had these things in them, and so abounded in them, that they were neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and those who, though true Christians, have, in consequence of indulged indolence and worldliness, done but little to honour their Lord and advance his cause. To the former, "an abundant entrance shall be ministered into the everlasting kingdom,"¹—they shall enter with full-spread sail and with a favourable wind the harbour of eternal rest; while of the latter it may be said, that "some of them on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, escape safe to land." It is a general principle of the divine government, extending to other cases than that of ministers receiving a recompense according to their respective services to the Church of God: "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."² In this point of light the force of the motive may be thus expressed: 'Be holy; for in proportion to your attainments in holiness here, will be your measure of enjoyment hereafter.' Such seems to

¹ 2 Pet. i. 11. Ὅσα πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἰσόδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλίαν—I. X.

² Luke xix. 13; Gal. vi. 4, 5; Heb. vi. 10; Rev. xxii. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10; 1 Cor. iii. 13-15; Acts xxvii. 44; 1 Cor. iii. 8.

me the force of this motive, viewed as addressed respectively to professed Christians and to real Christians.

Like the preceding motive, this receives additional force from the peculiarity of the phraseology in which it is clothed. It is not, since God, or the righteous Judge; but it is, since "the Father on whom ye call"¹—or, "He whom ye call Father—judgeth every man according to his work." If we consider the rendering given by our translators as the just one, then the force of the descriptive appellation in increasing the power of the motive may be thus expressed: 'It is not wonderful that your heathen neighbours should be characterized by injustice and inhumanity; it is not wonderful that they should "fashion themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance." He whom they call on as father—Jupiter, their father of gods and men—is a being actuated by human passions, liable to human vices, arbitrary in his dealings, and capricious in his acquittals and condemnations, in his rewards and punishments. An unholy life is just what you might expect in them from the character of the object of their worship. But it should be otherwise with you. He on whom you call, whom you worship, is the Father—the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Saviour of men. He is "holy in all his ways, and just in all his doings." How incongruous, then, were you not obedient and holy, would the character of the worshipper be with the character of the Deity!'

If we prefer the rendering, "since He whom ye call Father judgeth every man according to his work," which we are rather disposed to do, then the manner in which the peculiar phraseology modifies the motive may be thus unfolded: 'You stand in the relation of children to a father, to the

¹ The apostle probably had in his mind the exordium of the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples, Matt. vi. 9, and Jer. iii. 19, *πατέρα καλίστα* *με*.

great object of religious and moral duty. He has acknowledged you as his "children through faith in Christ Jesus;" and you, by his Spirit sent forth into your hearts, have called him Father. May he not then say to you, "A son honoureth his father; if I be a Father, where is my honour" if ye are not children of obedience? Surely, if you have cried to him "My Father," you should permit him to be your guide. Surely, when you have called him Father, you should not turn away from him.'¹

And beware of presuming on this endearing relation, as if it would secure his winking at your negligence and disobedience. His very love as a Father would prevent this. But this is not all. The kind Father is the righteous and impartial Judge. "He whom you call Father, without respect of persons judgeth every man's works." Again, to quote Leighton: "The true Christian reasons thus, 'I will not sin, for my Father is the just Judge; but for my frailties I will hope for mercy, for the Judge is my Father.'"

§ 4. *The provision made for sanctification in the sacrifice of Christ, a motive to Christian duty.*

The fourth motive urged by the apostle for the discharge of Christian duty, and the employment of the means calculated and intended to secure and facilitate its performance, is drawn from the wonderful plan which God has formed and executed for making men holy, even the death of his own Son as a sacrifice for sin. 'Be obedient children; fashion not yourselves according to your lusts in your ignorance; be holy in all manner of conversation; and in order to this, be resolutely determined, be moderate, hope to the end, and pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain

¹ Gal. iii. 26; Mal. i. 6; Jer. iii. 4, 19.

conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”’

In pressing home a motive adduced by an inspired writer, the Christian expositor has two things to do: first, to exhibit distinctly the meaning of the statement made, and then to show how that statement is fitted to serve the purpose for which it is made. In a complicated sentence, like that which is now the subject of consideration, it is of importance clearly to apprehend what is the primary sentiment, and what are the secondary and subsidiary ideas which are introduced for the purpose of its more impressive exhibition. Happily in the case before us, the leading idea is so prominent as to be easily recognised. It is obviously this: ‘Jesus Christ died as a sacrificial victim, in order that men might be made holy;’ and the secondary and subservient ideas, all calculated to give additional force to this wonderful statement as a motive to Christian duty, are the following: the intrinsic value of the sacrifice; its divine appointment; its having been actually offered; and the abundant evidence that it has not been offered in vain.

The primary idea is, Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, in order to make men holy; the most animating of all encouragements, the most powerful of all motives to Christian duty. Christ Jesus shed his blood as a sacrificial victim, to redeem or deliver men from “the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers.”

“Conversation” here, as in a previous part of the paragraph, and as indeed in almost every place in the New Testament, signifies character and conduct, habitual temper

and behaviour. The expression, "conversation received by tradition from your fathers,"¹ has by many, by most interpreters, been considered as referring principally, if not solely, to what may be called the hereditary Jewish religious and moral character and habits, the mode of thinking and feeling and acting formed in the natural mind under the influence of the peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation, and handed down from generation to generation. This appears to me to limit unduly the meaning of the very expressive phrase now before us. The "conversation" here mentioned is not anything peculiar to Jews, it is something common to man; it is the character and conduct formed by men "fashioning themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance;" the character and conduct which result from the influence of present things on the depraved principles of our fallen nature; what the Apostle Paul calls "the flesh" and "the old man," in its members and operations, in his desires and deeds; the hereditary character of fallen man, received by tradition, handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. This conversation is termed "vain," foolish,² useless conversation. This conduct in some of its varieties "has a show of wisdom," but in every case it is really foolish. They who are distinguished by it, even when they profess to be wise—boast of their wisdom—show themselves to be fools.³ It serves no good purpose. It does not, it cannot, lead to solid satisfaction, to permanent happiness. It may well be asked, "What fruit had ye," what fruit can ye have, "in these things?"⁴

To be "redeemed" is to be delivered; and the word

¹ *παροπαράδοτον*.

² *μωραία*, vana vivendi ratio, quæ, ubi tempus præterit, nil reliqui fructus habet.—BENGEL.

³ Rom. i. 21.

⁴ Rom. vi. 21.

"redeem"¹ is employed rather than another, because the deliverance referred to is deliverance through the payment of a ransom. To be delivered from this character and conduct, this mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, which is natural, hereditary to fallen man, and which is foolish because vain, is just to be delivered from depravity, to be made holy, to be "delivered from this present evil world," to be "redeemed from all iniquity," to be rescued from the slavery of sin.²

Having thus shortly illustrated what is peculiar or difficult in the phraseology, let us proceed with equal briefness to elucidate the statement, which plainly consists of two parts: Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin; and Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin to deliver men from depravity, to make them holy.

Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin. This is the only satisfactory account which can be given of that most wonderful of all events—the death, the violent death, the shameful, painful, accursed death of the innocent, the perfect, incarnate, only-begotten of God. This event would have been utterly inexplicable, had we not been informed in a plain, well-accredited divine revelation, that this immaculately holy, this absolutely perfect, this infinitely dignified person occupied, by divine appointment, and to gain the most important and otherwise unattainable objects in the moral government of the universe, the place of guilty men; and, occupying their place, met with their desert, did what they were bound to do, suffered what they deserved to suffer, did and suffered all that was necessary, in the estimation of infinite wisdom and righteousness, to lay a foundation for their pardon and salvation. "We all, like sheep, had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and the Lord made to meet on *him*," as the

¹ *λυτρώθητι*.

² Gal. i. 4; Tit. ii. 14.

destined victim, "the iniquities of us all." The consequence was, "exaction was made, and he became answerable." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," instead of destroying us; and "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" was "made sin in our room;" died as "the just one, in the stead of the unjust;" "redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse in our room."¹ The direct and primary end of this sacrifice, so far as man is concerned, was to effect a change in his relation to God—to lay a foundation for an alteration in our state—to secure pardon, and restoration to the enjoyment of the divine favour; but the ultimate and most important end of this sacrifice in reference to man was, through this change of relation to effect a change of disposition, through this alteration of state to secure a transformation of character.

This is the second part of the apostle's statement. When the blood of Christ was shed as a victim for sin, it was to deliver men from "the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers." Deliverance from depravity is an essential part, in some points of view the most important part, of the Christian salvation; and deliverance from guilt, and that sacrifice which was necessary, and is sufficient, to secure deliverance from guilt, are the grand means of securing this deliverance from depravity. The connection of the atonement with sanctification is frequently stated in Scripture, and is one of the most peculiar and important principles of the Christian faith. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people,

¹ Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Gal. iii. 13.

zealous of good works." "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from this present evil world." Christ "sanctified himself," devoted himself to suffer as a sacrificial victim, that his people might be "sanctified through the truth." "When he died for all, all died in him; and he died for them, that they might not live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse in our room," not only "that the blessing of Abraham"—a full and free justification—"should come upon us Gentiles," but that "we also might obtain the promised Spirit," the source of all true holiness, "by believing."¹

The manner in which the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, as the great sacrificial victim, secures the holiness of all who believe in him, may be stated in a few words, though fully and satisfactorily to illustrate it would require more space than we can here devote to it.

The atonement, by making it consistent with the divine justice to confer spiritual blessings on sinners, removes out of the way of their sanctification obstacles otherwise insurmountable; by procuring for the Saviour, as one part of the reward of his generous labours in the cause of God's glory, the power of dispensing divine influence, it secures what is at once absolutely necessary and completely sufficient for making men holy; and, finally, the statement of the truth about Christ, the Son of God, suffering and dying in the room of sinners, contained in the Scriptures, when understood and believed, is, under divine influence, the grand means of destroying in the sinner's mind that enmity against God which is the elementary principle of all depravity, and of kindling up in his heart the love of God, which is the elementary principle of all holiness,—of delivering the man

¹ Tit. ii. 13, 14; Gal. i. 4; John xvii. 19; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Gal. iii. 13, 14.

from the demoralizing influence of "the present evil world," "things seen and temporal," and bringing him under the sanctifying influence of "things unseen and eternal." This, then, is the apostle's statement: "The blood of Christ has been shed to redeem you from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. The Son of God has died as a sacrifice for sin, in order to secure your holiness."

Surely it does not require many words to show that this is a motive, an all-powerful motive, to the Christian to avoid sin and practise duty. Has deliverance from depravity been secured at such a cost, and shall I pour contempt on the divine generosity? Shall I counteract the great design of the death of Christ? Though he shed his blood that I might be redeemed from my vain conversation, shall I still fashion myself according to my former lusts in my ignorance? Shall I still hug the chains, to break asunder which the Lord of glory toiled, and bled, and died? How can I, in whose room Christ died for sin—how can I any longer live in sin? Reckoning myself—as, if I believe the truth, I well may—to have died by sin in Christ Jesus, and to be alive in Christ Jesus by God, surely it is the most unnatural and incongruous of all things in me to allow sin to "reign in my mortal body, so that I should obey it by its desires." Surely I should not "yield my members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but I should yield myself to God, as one alive from the dead, and my members to him as instruments of righteousness." Surely I should be a child of obedience, surely I should "be holy in all manner of conversation."¹ To use the words of Archbishop Leighton: "This is an answer for all the enticements of sin and of the world,—'Except you can offer my soul something beyond the price that was given for it

¹ Rom. vi. 8-13.

on the cross, I cannot hearken to you. Far be it from me that I should prefer a base lust, or anything in this world, or it all, to him who gave himself to death for me, and paid my ransom with his blood. His matchless love has freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath for ever fastened me to the sweet yoke of obedience. Let him alone to dwell and rule in me, and let him never go forth from my heart, who for my sake refused to come down from the cross.”

The motive, even when presented in this simple unadorned form, is surely one of transcendent power; but it derives additional force from the circumstances with which the inspired writer, with obvious intention, surrounds it in the passage before us. He fixes our mind on a variety of circumstances respecting that sacrifice for sin, by means of which we are emancipated from depravity, all of which are plainly calculated to make the consideration that such a sacrifice had been offered for such a purpose, tell more powerfully on the understanding, on the conscience, and on the heart.

And first, there is the intrinsic worth of the sacrifice. This is brought before the mind in two ways. It was “silver and gold, those corruptible things;” it was “the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” The value of what was given to secure our emancipation from depravity, cannot be estimated by any created mind. All the gold and silver in the world, the universe of created things, are as nothing and vanity, when compared to the life-blood of the only-begotten of God. The blessing to be obtained was too valuable to be procured by such means. “It could not be gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof. It could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal could not equal it;

and the exchange of it could not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention need be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of it was above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia could not equal it, neither could it be valued with pure gold."¹ What must be the value of holiness, when to secure it such a price was paid; and what must be the folly of him who contemns so valuable a possession, secured for him at so inestimable a cost!

A second way in which the value of the sacrifice is brought before the mind, is by describing it "as the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish and without spot."² In plain language, it was an all-perfect sacrifice. The death of Jesus Christ, viewed as the crowning act of a course of perfect obedience to the precept, and of perfect submission to the sanction of the divine law, on the part of the most exalted being, both as to essential dignity and moral worth, "magnifies the law and makes it honourable," in a degree which the perfect obedience of a universe of unerring creatures, or the everlasting torments of a universe of sinning creatures, could not have done; and sweeps away, as with the force of ocean bursting from her bed, all the obstructions which human guilt had placed in the way of human holiness. And shall I, in opposing the ultimate design of this all-perfect sacrifice in reference to myself, show my contempt of it?

The second circumstance respecting this sacrifice, the grand means of holiness, which the apostle notices, is, that it was the subject of divine appointment. Jesus, as the victim for the sins of men, and thus the author of holiness to men, was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." He was a voluntary but not self-appointed victim.

¹ Job xxviii. 15, etc.

² Ἀμόμω. Jesus Christus in se non habuit labem. Ἀσπίλου, neque extrinsecus maculam contraxit.—BENGEL.

He was "set forth,"¹—fore-appointed "a propitiation in his blood." When "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against God's holy child Jesus, they but did what his hand and counsel had before determined to be done." He was "set up from everlasting."² And shall we, by disregarding or counteracting the design of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin to secure holiness, show that we lightly esteem what has employed the thoughts of the uncreated Mind from all eternity?

The third circumstance noticed by the apostle is, that this sacrifice has been actually offered. This wondrous scheme is not now mere plan. The inestimable price has been paid; the amazing expiation has been made; the spotless Lamb of God has been manifested in these last times, bearing, and bearing away, the sins of the world. And shall all this have been done in vain, so far as we are concerned? for it is done in vain if we continue still in our sins.

The fourth and last circumstance noticed by the apostle, respecting the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, designed for securing holiness to man, calculated to increase its efficacy as a motive to avoid sin and perform duty, is the abundant evidence that it has answered the purpose for which it was intended. The sacrifice has been offered, and it has not been offered in vain. Had not the death of Christ served its purpose, it could not have been followed by his resurrection. If he had not risen again, then would we have had reason to conclude, "we are yet in our sins," with our guilt unexpiated, and the fetters of depravity unbroken. But we have abundant ground for concluding

¹ Rom. iii. 25. *Πρόσθετο*.—There is no doubt of the fact; but it may be doubted whether *πρόσθετο* refers to appointment or to exhibition.

² Acts iv. 27, 28; Prov. viii. 23.

that "Messiah, cut off, but not for himself," has "finished transgression, made an end of sin." If he died "for our offences," he has been "raised again for our justification."¹ "God has raised him from the dead, and given him glory." "It is finished," said the dying Saviour on the cross; and from the throne of his glory, when he broke the bands of death, the Father responded, It is finished. In the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus we have a sure foundation laid for our "faith and hope in God," as "the God of peace," the pacified Divinity, "who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."² In this we have a proof that he is well pleased with Christ, well pleased with sinners in Christ, and disposed, as "the God of peace, to sanctify them wholly, and preserve their whole spirit, soul and body, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."³ And shall we, notwithstanding these proofs of God's approbation of the sacrifice of his Son—shall we, by not improving it for the purpose of our own sanctification, treat this "blood of the covenant," by which alone men can be sanctified, as if it were a common thing, destitute of all power to "purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"⁴

Such, then, is the Christian's duty, such are the means of performing it, and such are the motives to its performance.

The whole of this discourse has been practical, and stands little in need of what is ordinarily termed application or improvement. May the Holy Spirit give efficacy to the word of his grace, and may we all learn habitually, through the truth by the Spirit, to "cleanse ourselves from all

¹ Dan. ix. ; Rom. iv. 25.

² Heb. xiii. 20.

³ 1 Thess. v. 23.

⁴ Heb. x. 29, *iv ἡγιασθέν*; Heb. ix. 14.

filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God ;” “ denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly in this world ; and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ! ” ¹

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1 ; Tit. ii. 12-14.

DISCOURSE VI.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERLY LOVE, ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED.

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”—1 PER. i. 22–25.

THE sentence now read as the theme of discourse, though long and somewhat complicated, will be found, when carefully examined, to be entirely occupied with one subject—the great Christian duty of brotherly love. That duty is at once explicitly enjoined and powerfully recommended. The injunction is contained in these words, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” The motives by which compliance with this injunction is enforced, are brought forward in the clauses which precede and follow this injunction: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren,” and “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

The duty enjoined, then, and the motives which urge to its performance, are the two great topics to which our attention must be successively directed in the illustration of this passage. The duty is brought before our minds in its nature,—mutual love, “love one another,” “the love of the brethren;” and in two of its distinctive characters,—love “with a pure heart,” “fervent love.” The motives to the cultivation and expression of this Christian affection are two, which we shall find it convenient to consider in an order the reverse of that in which they are stated in the text. *First*, Christians are distinguished by a mutual relation extremely intimate and altogether indissoluble. By their “being born again,” they are all of them “the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus,” and therefore brethren; and the tie of that brotherhood is not, like that of all natural relations, liable to dissolution, its bond being the infallibly true word of the ever-living, immutable God, lodged, by being understood and believed, in the mind of immortal man (ver. 23). And *secondly*, Christians are possessed of a common character corresponding to this relation, to which they have been formed by the Holy Spirit, through the operation of truth believed under his influence (ver. 22). This mutual relation, and this common character, equally call on Christians to cultivate and exercise brotherly love. Such, then, is the outline of thought which I shall endeavour to fill up in the remaining part of the discourse.

I. BROTHERLY LOVE ILLUSTRATED.

§ 1. *The objects and elements of this love.*

The duty enjoined is LOVE. There is a love which every man owes to every other man, without reference to his spiritual state or character, merely because he is a man,—a sincere desire to promote his true welfare. This is the

love which the apostle, with obvious propriety, represents as "the fulfilling of the law,"¹ so far as it refers to our duties to our fellow-men; for he who is under its influence can "do no ill" to any man: he cannot intentionally injure his person, property, or reputation; but, on the contrary, must, "as he has opportunity, do good to all men." Good-will is the essence, the sole component element, of this love. The love enjoined in our text is obviously much more limited in its range, and much more comprehensive in its elementary principles.

(1.) It is called "the love of the brethren," "brotherly kindness," as contradistinguished from that "charity" which has for its object the whole race of man; who, though all brethren, inasmuch as "they have one Father, one God has created them," are not all brethren in the sense in which this appellation is here used. This appellation is limited to what was then, to what is still, a comparatively small class of mankind—genuine Christians. It can be exercised only by them; it can be exercised only to them. A man who is *unchristian*, who is *antichristian* in his opinions and temper and conduct, may highly esteem, may tenderly love, a true Christian, but he cannot cherish towards him "brotherly kindness;" he loves him not because, but notwithstanding, he is a Christian. A Christian man may, he does, cordially love all mankind; he desires the happiness of every being capable of happiness; he esteems what is estimable; he loves what is amiable; he admires what is admirable; he pities what is suffering, wherever he meets with it; but he cannot regard with "brotherly kindness" any one but a Christian brother. None but a Christian can either be the object or the subject of this benevolent affection. None but a Christian can either be the agent or the recipient of the kind offices in which it finds expression.

¹ Rom. xiii. 8-10.

This limitation is a matter, not of choice, but of necessity. Most gladly would the Christian regard all his fellow-men as fellow-Christians, if they would put it in his power, by becoming Christians; but till they do so, it is, in the nature of things, impossible that he should feel towards them as if they were what they are not. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of Christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and feeling, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views and to cherish the same dispositions. They love one another "in the truth; for the truth's sake, that dwelleth in them, and shall be with them for ever."¹

(2.) This circumstance, which necessarily limits this principle as to its range, gives it greater comprehension of elementary principles, and greater intensity of influence and activity of operation. It includes good-will in its highest degree; but to this it adds moral esteem, complacential delight, tender sympathy. This it does in every instance; but the degree in which these elementary principles are to be found in individual cases of Christian brotherly kindness, depends on a variety of circumstances, and chiefly on the approach that is made to completeness and perfection in the Christian character on the part of him who exercises it, and of him towards whom it is exercised. Every Christian loves every other Christian when he knows him; but the more accomplished the Christian is, whether he be the subject or object of Christian love, the more does he put forth, or draw forth, its holy benignant influence.

The end of all love is the good or the happiness of its object, as that happiness is conceived of by its subject. The

¹ 2 John 2.

great end which Christian brotherly love contemplates, is the happiness of its object, viewed as a Christian man; his deliverance from ignorance and error and sin, in all their forms and in all their degrees; his progressive, and ultimately his complete happiness, in entire conformity to the mind and will of God; the unclouded sense of the divine favour, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine fellowship, the being like the ever-blessed "holy, holy, holy One." It does not overlook any of the interests of its object, but it views them all in reference, in subordination, to the enjoyment of "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory." Such is the general nature of the brotherly love here enjoined.

§ 2. *The distinctive characters of Christian love.*

Let us now look a little at the characters by which it is required to be distinguished. (1.) Christians are required to love one another "with a pure heart." The leading idea here has generally been supposed to be genuineness—sincerity. It must be real love, not affected or put on. It must be what the Apostle Paul calls "love without dissimulation;"¹ what the Apostle John calls "loving not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."² It is an affection, of which the internal feeling and the practical effects fully correspond to, rather outrun than fall short of, the verbal expression. While the "law of kindness is on the lips," kindness itself is in the heart; and the fruits of kindness, substantial benefits, make their appearance in the conduct.

But while there can be no doubt that hypocrisy is one species of "filthiness of the spirit," of the impurity of the heart, it is not the only species which opposes the exercise of Christian love. The "pure heart" includes more than sincerity; it includes freedom from all low, selfish motives and ends. "Love with a pure heart" signifies the bene-

¹ Rom. xii. 9.

² 1 John iii. 18.

volent affection that naturally flows from a sanctified heart, and which can issue from no other fountain; which loves chiefly for such causes as can excite affection only in a sanctified heart; which seeks for its objects such a happiness as only a sanctified heart can desire; and which seeks it by means which only a sanctified heart can dispose or enable a man to employ.

(2.) But Christians are required to "love one another," not only "with a pure heart," but "fervently." The term rendered "fervently" is a very expressive one, and I do not know any one English word which fully brings out its meaning.¹ It conveys the idea of constancy. It is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is said—Prayer was made by the Church for Peter when in prison, "without ceasing."² Brotherly kindness must be constant, not fitful. Its causes are permanent and constant in their operation, and so should it be. It should be such love as will prevent "weariness in well-doing." A Christian brother, when he acts like himself, "loves at all times." No change of circumstances, especially to the worse, on the part of its object, should affect it except in the way of increasing it.

But besides the idea of constancy, the word conveys the idea of intensity and power. It is the term employed where it is said that our Lord, "being in an agony, prayed more **EARNESTLY**."³ Our Christian love should be strong as well as genuine, such as slight causes shall not be able to destroy, or even materially to affect, and such as shall be capable of producing great effects, making us willing to make strenuous exertions and costly sacrifices for its objects, when these are necessary to gain its ends. It should be so fervent as that "many waters" of neglect, infirmities, offences, petty injuries, "shall not quench it," or even damp its ardour. It has been happily, though in

¹ *ἐκτενῶς*.

² Acts xii. 5.

³ Luke xxii. 44.

homely phrase, said, "It should be like the sacred fire which descended on Elijah's sacrifice, which licked up the water and mud in the surrounding ditch; it should absorb a whole trenchful of such stuff, and still retain strength enough to send up to heaven the grateful fumes of the sacrifices with which God is well pleased." And it should manifest its strength not merely by overcoming opposing obstacles, but by making exertions and sacrifices. It should be such as would lead us even "to lay down our lives for the brethren,"¹ if so costly a sacrifice were required of us.

This love is to be manifested in choosing for our friends and associates our Christian brethren, joining ourselves to the brotherhood, casting in our lot with them, "walking with them in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," sympathizing with them in their griefs, rejoicing with them in their joys, communicating to them in their necessities, assisting them in their labours, bearing with their infirmities, ay, bearing their infirmities; admonishing them, and reproving them, it may be sharply, when they are to be blamed, yet all in kindness, loving them too well to suffer sin upon them; delighting in their Christian attainments and triumphs as if they were our own; never being ashamed of them, however low their place in society, and however frowned on and persecuted by the world—never "ashamed to call them brethren."

And it must manifest itself not only in what we do, but in the manner in which we do it. To relieving a poor brother, it should not be necessary that he implore our help. If "we see him have need," that should be enough to secure our assistance. We should be "GIVEN," disposed, "to hospitality;" "READY to distribute;" "WILLING," inclined, "to communicate." Instead of waiting for the call of a distressed brother, we should run to his help.

¹ 1 John iii. 16.

We should feel one another's crosses, bear one another's burdens, allay the sorrows, supply the wants, sympathize with the wrongs, espouse the cause, protect the persons, and relieve the necessities, of our brethren in Christ.

(3.) There is one character which it is of peculiar importance that our mutual affection as Christians should be distinguished by. It should be love like Christ's. "Little children," said he who "is not ashamed to call us brethren,"—"Little children, a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye likewise should love one another."¹ And how did he love his people? His love was free and ready, considerate and wise, laborious and expensive, generous and self-sacrificing; looking to all their interests, but chiefly to their highest interests; not forgetting that they had bodies, but chiefly concerned about their souls: and such should be our brotherly love. He took an interest in everything that concerned them; he instructed and counselled and comforted them; he prayed with them, and for them; he vindicated them when they were accused; apologized for them when their conduct admitted of apology; reprov'd them, but in love, when they deserved it; bore with their infirmities; made much of what was good in them, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him than brother, sister, or mother: and thus should we manifest our love to the brethren.²

Like all the commands of our divine Lord, this injunction is characterized by benignant wisdom. It is by loving one another that the highest interest of the whole Christian family is promoted. Everything thus becomes common property. I have the advantage of all that any of my Christian brethren possesses. Under the influence of this principle, the wise direct the strong, and the strong protect

¹ John xiii. 34.

² Henry *in loc.*

the wise; the zealous stimulate the considerate, and the considerate restrain the zealous. The means of promoting holy happiness are thus prodigiously enlarged, every one employing his peculiar gift and opportunities for the good of every other, and thus advancing the common benefit of all. Thus it is that Christians, "sincere (*ἀληθεύοντες*), truthful in love, grow up into all things to him who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."¹

(4.) This love is obviously not to be confined—when it is enlightened and genuine it cannot be confined—within the pale of any particular sect or denomination of Christians. The members of individual churches, and of bodies of associated churches, have, no doubt, opportunities of cultivating this affection towards each other which they do not enjoy in an equal degree in reference to Christians of equal, it may be of higher, spiritual excellence, with whom they have not the same means of becoming acquainted. But wherever I recognise the character, I should cherish and manifest the love, of a brother. These are well-considered words of the compilers of the Westminster Confession: "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, being united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints by profession are bound to entertain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things

¹ Eph. iv. 15, 16.

according to their several abilities and necessities; which communion, as God offereth opportunity, should be extended to 'all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus.'"¹

"There is something inexpressibly awful"—I use the words of "a brother beloved"—"to a believer's mind, in the idea that his Christian affection should be confined within narrower limits than the love of Jesus; that he should harbour in his heart any feeling inconsistent with love towards one whom Christ died to redeem; that any should be excluded from his prayer for the household of faith that have a part in the Saviour's intercession. Pitiable dreary must be the mind of that man who can look around on the wide world, and count his dozen or his score whom alone he can salute as brethren, or expect to accompany to heaven. Far from me, and from you, my Christian friends, be such self-sufficient bigotry, which freezes the fountain of love, and keeps the heart cold under the melting beams of 'the Sun of righteousness.'"²

To the cultivation and exercise of this love, the fundamental requisite is, the being a genuine Christian. The love of God is the elementary principle of the believer's character: as no man loves him who begat, who does not love them who are begotten of him; so no man can love those who are begotten, who does not love him who begat them. We must love God, in order to our loving his children. We must be in the family, in order to our having the family spirit. No man who has not been born of God can love those who are born of him, as His children; and all who are "born of God" are "taught of God to love one another."³ It is a divinely implanted instinct, as well as a divinely commanded duty.

¹ Westminster Conf. xxvi. 1, 2.

² Wardlaw.

³ 1 Thess. iv. 9. *οὐδὲδυστοι.*

But this gift needs to be stirred up; and the two grand means of stimulating it are, under divine influence, first, the cultivation of an intimate acquaintance, the maintenance of a holy fellowship, with our Christian brethren,—we cannot love those whom we do not know, for it is the manifestations of the character of our common Lord, which our brethren, who have contemplated him “with open face,” like so many mirrors, make, that endear them to us, and draw out our affection to them; and second, the keeping habitually before the mind the truths stated in the divine word respecting the spiritual relation and character of the objects of our Christian affection, which are calculated to excite and strengthen it.

In the passage before us the apostle employs the latter of these means for urging on those to whom he was writing the duty of Christian love. He brings before their minds the intimate mutual relation and the common spiritual character of true Christians. The consideration of these, as motives to Christian brotherly love, shall form the second part of the discourse.

II. BROTHERLY LOVE RECOMMENDED.

In the words of the first part of the 22d verse, and in the 23d, 24th, and 25th verses, the motives to Christian brotherly love are urged. Though the motive from common character, in this passage, precedes that drawn from mutual relation, yet, as relation is the basis of character, we apprehend some advantages may be derived from reversing the order. In the sequel, then, I shall shortly illustrate these two remarks: The intimate and indissoluble mutual relation among Christians as brethren, arising out of their common spiritual and indissoluble relation to God as their Father, is a strong motive to the cultivation

and display of brotherly kindness; and the common character to which they have been all formed by the agency of the same Spirit, and the instrumentality of the same truth, is another powerful motive to cherish and exercise this Christian grace. Let us illustrate these two principles, or rather let us attend to the apostle's illustration of them.

§ 1. *The mutual relation of Christians a motive to brotherly love.*

The intimate and indissoluble mutual relation between Christians as brethren, arising out of their intimate and indissoluble common relation to God as their Father, is a strong motive to the cultivation and exercise of Christian brotherly kindness. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being"—since ye are—all of you—"born again," become the children of God by a new, a spiritual, a heavenly birth,¹ "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

These words were originally addressed to churches, most of the members of which were converted Jews. These had, by their first and natural birth, been related mutually as members of the external holy family, by their common relation to Jehovah the God of Israel, through the link of their natural descent from Abraham. That relation, however, as belonging to the "flesh," to things seen and temporal, was liable to dissolution: in the case of the individual, at death; in the case of the nation, when the new

¹ "Nova cognatio novum desiderat affectum."—ERASMUS.

and better economy was introduced, when the substance took the place of the shadow, and the spirit of the letter. They had now, by a spiritual change termed the new or second birth, become mutually related as brethren, by becoming in common related to God as their spiritual Father. This relation was far superior to the former. It bound them together as spiritual beings to God, as "the Father of their spirits;" and it was effected in a manner corresponding to its nature. It was formed by truth being introduced into their minds—"by the word of God," "the word preached in the gospel," being understood and believed by them.¹ They were all ONE, inasmuch as they were "all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus."² That faith bound them to God, and to one another, and formed a bond suited to their natures as rational beings.

The intimate relation thus formed was a permanent one. The seed was "incorruptible." The phrase, "the word of God," is explanatory of the figurative expression—"the seed not corruptible, but incorruptible." The words, "which liveth and abideth for ever," viewed by themselves, might refer to God, "who only hath immortality," who is the Living One, inhabiting eternity; but when, in the passage quoted from the prophet Isaiah,³ apparently for the purpose of illustrating this phrase, we find the terms, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever," we cannot doubt that the epithets, "living and abiding for ever," are intended to be descriptive of "the word of the Lord," the grand link of the common connection of Chris-

¹ Few things could more strikingly show the power of preconceived opinion to produce misinterpretation, than the fact that "the word" has been here explained of the personal Word, to support a particular metaphysical theory respecting the nature of regeneration.

² Gal. iii. 26.

³ Isa. xl. 6, 7.

tians with their heavenly Father, and of their mutual relation to each other.

That word is eternal truth. That truth, introduced into the heart through divine influence, by being understood and believed, becomes a "living," active, operative principle there, producing holiness and joy. And it "abideth for ever:" it dwells an ever-living principle in an indestructible shrine—the never-dying human spirit; and dwelling for ever there, in the case of all the holy family it forms an everlasting link of connection with their common Father, and with each other.

This relation far surpasses all other relations. There is no brotherhood like this—none so intimate, none so lasting. The relation of a Jew to a fellow-Jew was very intimate. It was the relation of man to man, of kinsman to kinsman, of common heirs of the privileges of the first covenant to one another; but that relation, fruitful as it was of advantages (for the Jew, during the preparatory economy, had much and manifold advantage¹), had the taint of mortality. It belonged to "the flesh," to what was carnal and outward, not to what was spiritual and inward. It was perishable. But this relation, as it is spiritual in its nature, is unending in its duration. Till mind ceases to be mind, truth to be truth, God to be God, it must continue, binding believers in a holy, happy relation to God as their Father, and to one another as brethren, to all eternity. Was it not reasonable and right, then, that *they* should "love one another with a pure heart fervently?" If he is rightly considered as a monster who refuses to cherish and manifest peculiar regard to those who are connected with him by the ties of a natural relationship, which may in a moment, which must in a few years, be dissolved for ever, what name is to be given to a man calling himself a Chris-

¹ Rom. iii. 1, 2; ix. 4, 5.

tian, who does not regard and treat as brethren those who, if his profession be a sincere one, stand to him in a relation, of the intimacy of which the nearest earthly relation is but a feeble figure, and the duration of which can be measured only by the years of the Eternal?

§ 2. *The common character of Christians a motive to brotherly love.*

The common character to which all Christians have been formed by the agency of the same Spirit, and the instrumentality of the same word, is a strong motive to the cultivation and exercise of Christian brotherly kindness: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit to the unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The force of this motive is, Ye are now in a *moral capacity* for loving the brethren constantly and fervently; exert and manifest your moral power.

It was once otherwise. The unpurified soul, overrun with the loathsome leprosy of ungodliness, worldliness, selfishness, and malignity, was morally incapable of the healthy functions of its affectionate nature. It could not love Christ, Christianity, or Christians. But "old things are passed away;" there has been a radical cure effected: divine truth, under divine influence, has put forth its healing power over the diseased mind; the moral capacity of loving what is really lovely has been called into being; and now what remains but that it should be improved by being exercised?

The human heart is naturally a very impure place. It is "a habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, the cage of every unclean and hateful bird." "He who searches the heart," and is "the true and faithful witness," declares, that "out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders,

adulteries, and false witness.”¹ Everything that defiles the man originates there.

While the heart remains unpurified, the love of Christians, as Christians, cannot dwell there. There is no harmony, there is direct powerful antagonism, between the modes of thinking and feeling which characterize the natural, the unrenewed,—and the spiritual, the renewed, the Christian mind. But in the case of those whom the apostle was addressing, this impurity of soul was cleansed. “They had purified their souls in obeying the truth.”

“The truth” is the revelation of the character of God; the great reality, in the person and work of his Son, contained in the gospel; “the word of the truth of the gospel,” a well-accredited declaration of the mind and will of Him who cannot be deceived, and who cannot deceive; the very truth most sure. To obey that truth is to yield to its influence; and that, from the constitution of man, can be done only by understanding and believing it. He who refuses to attend to, to consider, to believe the truth, rebels against it, cannot submit to its influence. He, on the other hand, who attends to, considers, and believes it, cannot but yield to its influence.

The persons referred to had believed the gospel. They had received the grace of God not in vain, and they had done this “by the Spirit;” that is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who fixes the mind on the truth and its evidence, so as to lead to the belief of the truth. It is the man in the exercise of his rational faculties who believes; but he exercises these faculties under a divine influence. It is the man, not the Holy Spirit, who believes; but the man who believes, acts as he is influenced by the Holy Ghost.

The consequence of this faith, produced by divine influ-

¹ Matt. xv. 19.

ence, is such a purification of the soul as leads to the "unfeigned love of the brethren." "Ye have purified your souls to the unfeigned love of the brethren;" that is, 'Ye have so purified your souls, as that ye have now an unfeigned love of the brethren.' While the soul remains unpurified, if love to the brethren be expressed, it must be feigned, hypocritical; but when the soul is purified, the love of the brethren is a natural, spontaneous feeling. In the degree in which the truth is obeyed, the soul is purified; and in the degree in which the soul is purified, the brethren are loved.

Now, says the apostle, the Holy Spirit, through the faith of the truth, has bestowed on you the good gift of the love of the brethren. "Neglect not the gift that is in you." Cultivate the lovely plant. "Quench not the Spirit."¹ "Grieve not the Spirit."² Allow the truth, under his influence, "to dwell in you richly," "to reign in your minds and hearts," and fill them to an overflow with the love of the brethren.

A question naturally rises out of these discussions, which well deserves the serious consideration of each of us. Do we love the brethren with a pure heart fervently? Do we love the brethren *as* brethren? Do we love Christians *as* Christians? Do we love them on account of their relation to God and Christ, on account of their attachment to both, and on account of their resemblance to both? Do we cordially esteem them? Do we affectionately love them? Is our "delight" in them, as "the excellent ones of the earth?"³ as the Psalmist phrases it. Have we complacency in them? Do we make them "the men of our counsel?" Have we pleasure in their society, and are we endeavouring, by every means in our power, to promote their welfare?

¹ 1 Thess. v. 19.

² Eph. iv. 30.

³ Ps. xvi. 3.

If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, the Apostle John authorizes us to consider this as evidence of our having undergone a saving change of character. Hereby do "we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."¹ Happy are we, if we indeed habitually cherish this holy affection; but let us remember that it is at once our duty and our interest to abound in this affection and its fruits more and more. Let us remember, that the love of the brethren is the evidence that "we are in the light," and the continuance of it is the evidence that we are "abiding in the light"—that we are continuing to believe the truth, and are "rooted, grounded, and built up" in it.

Let us manifest our love in deeds of Christian kindness, and remember that that only is the love of the brethren which is "not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth." Let us show our love by "walking in all lowliness, esteeming each other better than ourselves; forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; putting away all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking; being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Let us put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering; and, above all, let us put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Let us "do good, and communicate," especially to the household of faith. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, let us not be content with saying, Depart in peace, be ye fed, be ye clothed; but let us give them the things which are needful for the body: for whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need,

¹ 1 John iii. 14.

and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth either the love of God, or of the brethren, in him ?”¹

If we would have this affection, so closely connecting us with God, for “he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,” and never are we surer of having “our fellowship truly with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ” than when we love the brethren ; if we would have this godlike affection strong within us, constantly, powerfully operative, we must continue “purifying our souls by obeying the truth by the Spirit.” “Whence come wars and fightings among Christians ? Come they not from hence, even of our lusts which war in our members ?”² And how are these selfish desires to be mortified, weakened, destroyed, but by the growing faith and influence of the truth as it is in Jesus ? If we would have our hearts warm with the love of the saints, we must seek to have them warm with the love of the Saviour ; and if we would have our hearts warmed with his love, we must keep near him, in the believing study of his word, and in affectionate intercourse with him in all the offices of Christian devotion. “Let us then abide in *Him*,” and he will abide in *us* ; and thus shall we “bring forth much fruit”³ in works and labours of love. The mind that was in him will thus be in us ; we shall be “in the world as *He* was in the world,” and “walk as he also walked.” May He whose name and nature is love, bind us as a Christian church more and more in the bonds of a sincere, enlightened, holy love ; and, as “the God of patience and consolation, grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus ; that we may walk together in love, even as Christ has loved us ; and that

¹ Eph. iv. 2, 3, 31 ; Col. iii. 14 ; Heb. xiii. 16 ; James ii. 15, 16 ; 1 John iii. 17.

² James iv. 1.

³ John xv. 4.

we with one mind and one mouth may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"¹

If there be in this audience—as I know there may be, as I fear there are—some, whether with or without a profession of religion, whose hearts tell them that they do not love the brethren, that they have no complacency in Christian excellence, no relish for Christian society, I affectionately beseech them to consider what awfully important facts are necessarily connected with that fact, to which their consciences now give testimony—that they do not love the brethren. It is a proof, my friends, that you have “not passed from death to life;” that you have no part nor lot as yet in the Christian salvation; that you do not love God, that you do not love Christ; that you are not God’s children, nor Christ’s brethren; that you are utterly unfit for heaven, where none of the human race but *the brethren* dwell. You have no relish for their society here, you would have still less there; for the peculiarities of character which make them disagreeable to you on earth, will be greatly heightened in heaven. What a deplorable state is that man in, who, even if he could get into heaven, the abode of perfect happiness, the only place where happiness is to be found at all, could not be happy!

But into heaven, continuing unprepared, you cannot be admitted. If you do not love Christians, you do not love Christ; and “if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, he will be anathema maranatha,”² accursed at his coming. Oh, my friends, “you must be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even the word of God, which liveth and endureth for ever,” else “you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” You must “purify your souls in obeying the truth by the Spirit to the unfeigned love of the brethren,” else you can never “sit down with Abraham,

¹ Rom. xv. 5, 6.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of our Father." No, you must be "shut out in utter darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."¹ What a dreadful prospect to every one who loves not the brethren, especially who, calling himself a brother, loves not the brethren! He that loves not his brother, hates him; and "he that hateth his brother is in darkness, walketh in darkness;"² and though he may not know whither he is going, "for darkness hath blinded his eyes," "his feet go down to death, his steps take hold of hell," and he is moving onward to the blackness of darkness for ever.

Oh that he would but open his eyes to "the light of life!" Oh that he would but look at the glory of God, as it irradiates the countenance of his incarnate Son! Then would he learn to love God; "the love of God would be shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him;" and, learning to love God, he would learn to love all his children, all his children of mankind, especially all his children by "faith in Christ Jesus." In the mutual kind offices of Christian friendship, he would enjoy a satisfaction which worldly fellowship never can bestow; and in due time join the general assembly on high, where love has its triumphs; where "all the wise, the holy, and the just, who ever existed in the universe of God, shall be associated without any distress to trouble their mutual bliss, or any source of disagreement, either from within or without, to interrupt their harmony; where the voice of discord never rises, the whisper of suspicion never circulates; where each, happy in himself, participates in the happiness of all the rest, and by reciprocal communications of love and friendship, at once receives from, and adds to, the sum of general felicity."³ Who would not wish to belong to this happy society, this goodly fellowship, this glorious company? The

¹ Matt. viii. 11, 12.

² 1 John ii. 11.

³ Blair.

door stands open : "Obey the truth by the Spirit." The road lies plainly before you : "Purify yourselves by this obedience." Thus shall you come immediately into the enjoyment of the fellowship of the saints on earth, and "being made meet for," shall ere long be made partakers of, the "inheritance of the saints" in heaven.

DISCOURSE VII.

A FIGURATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS, WITH APPROPRIATE EXHORTATIONS.

"Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."—1 PET. ii. 1-3.

ON no subject is it of more importance that mankind should entertain correct views, than on the nature and extent of that inward change, that moral revolution, in which genuine personal Christianity originates, and which, according to the different aspects in which it is viewed, is termed effectual calling, conversion, repentance or a change of mind, regeneration or the new birth. This, if anything is, is a matter of fundamental, vital practical importance. Error here cannot be innocent in either sense of the word. It can neither exist without fault, nor be held without danger. Mistakes on such a subject cannot be blameless, must be hazardous, may be fatal.

Yet on few points do even that part, that small part of mankind, who have made it in some degree a subject of thought, err more seriously, and in opposite directions, than on this. By a large portion of men, very low, narrow views are entertained respecting the extent of the change, and the agency necessary in order to effect it. In their estimation, there is nothing radically wrong with human nature. Man has no doubt fallen into errors which need to be corrected; he has formed bad habits which require

to be changed: but in order to effect such an alteration in human character and conduct, nothing more is necessary than to awaken into action the sleeping energies of his intellectual and moral nature, and direct them steadily towards the desired object; and education and self-discipline are held quite sufficient to answer this purpose.

On the other hand, not a few seem to think that the change is so entirely supernatural as to preclude the necessity and propriety of the employment of human agency as the means either of originating or advancing it. They seem to think, that it is so God's work, as that in no way is it, or can it be, man's work; that men have nothing to do in the matter, but to wait till God has made them new creatures, and that, after God has made them new creatures, they need give themselves no concern—God will look after his own work; and they, being quite sure of final salvation, have only to guard against unbelief, which, in their way of viewing it, means entertaining doubts with regard to the safety of their spiritual state, and the certainty of their ultimate happiness.

The passage of Scripture which I have just read, especially in connection with that which precedes it, cuts up both these soul-ruining errors by the root. On the one hand, it teaches us plainly that the change is no superficial one. It is a new birth; there is a new moral nature produced, of which the ever-enduring, ever-living word of God is the seminal principle. It is a change produced by the Spirit; and the soul, the heart, the inner man, is the subject of this change. It is no such surface change as the progress of civilisation, the authority of law, the influence of education, the force of self-discipline, can effect. It is a permanent, divinely effected change in the deepest springs of human action—the understanding, the conscience, and the affections.

But, on the other hand, it teaches us as plainly, that this

change is effected through the knowledge and belief of the truth, in a manner quite consistent with man's rational moral nature, with that freedom of choice which is essential to his being a responsible agent; that the change, though reaching every part of man's nature, is in no part of that nature complete or perfect; that though a new creature, he is but as a new-born babe, and needs to grow, and must use the appointed means of growth; that though he has "put on the new man," he needs more and more to "put off the old man, who is corrupt," and more and more to "put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;" that though he is made a "partaker of the divine nature, and has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," he must "give all diligence to add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," knowing that, "if these things be in him and abound, he is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that "in doing these things," for doing which "the divine power has given to him all things that pertain to life and godliness," "he shall never fall, but so an entrance shall at last be ministered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."¹

These are the views given us in the context, and confirmed by many other passages of Scripture, in reference to that great change by which a natural man becomes a spiritual man. And in perfect accordance with them, we find the apostle exhorting those who had by the Spirit been born again, to get rid with all possible speed of all the characteristics of their unregenerate state, and to seek with untiring eagerness progress and perfection in all the cha-

¹ Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 3-11.

racteristics of their new state ; and, for this purpose, constantly to employ the means in their own nature calculated, and by divine statute appointed, to gain these ends ; accompanying his exhortation with powerful motives, suited to the nature of the duties enjoined, and the character and circumstances of those to whom the exhortation is addressed.

To this exhortation it is my purpose at present to turn your minds ; and that it may have an appropriate effect on our understandings, consciences, and hearts, let us briefly consider—I. Who the persons are to whom the exhortation is addressed ; II. What are the duties to which the exhortation urges ; and III. What are the motives by which the exhortation is enforced.

I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE EXHORTATION IS
ADDRESSED.

§ 1. *General view of their state and character.*

The persons to whom the exhortation was primarily addressed were the Christians, chiefly recently converted Jews, scattered abroad through the regions of Asia Minor. They were a part of the mystical Israel, the spiritual people of God. They are described in the preceding chapter as “elected,” chosen, selected from the rest of their brethren and from the world lying under the wicked one, like ancient Israel, not on the ground of their being better than others, but on the ground of the divine foreknowledge or appointment,—the gracious sovereign decree of God ; and, unlike their forefathers, they were by their selection separated or sanctified, not by an external, but by a spiritual separation, from the unbelieving part of mankind ; and the object of this spiritual separation, originating entirely in sovereign mercy, was not that, like their forefathers, they might obey the law of Moses, and, being sprinkled with the blood of

the victims by which the first covenant was ratified, might enjoy the external privileges of that covenant, but that they might obey the truth, believe the gospel, and, being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ—that is, being personally interested in the saving results of his atoning sacrifice—they might enjoy the heavenly and spiritual blessings of the second covenant, of which the shedding of the blood of Christ as an expiatory victim was the effectual ratification. They were persons who, through the resurrection of Christ,—as the seal of the divine acceptance of his atoning sacrifice, and as one grand source of that evidence on which rests the faith which interests men personally in Christ and in his salvation,—had been brought into the state and formed to the character of the children of God, secured of ultimate complete salvation as their inheritance, and blessed with a present living hope of that complete salvation. They were the sincere lovers of an unseen Saviour; they were devout worshippers of the Father. Their faith and their hope were in God, who had raised Christ Jesus from the dead, and given him glory. They had purified their souls in obeying the truth, so as to love the brethren unfeignedly; and the new relation into which they had been brought, both to God and to one another, by their regeneration, through the eternal Spirit and the ever-living word, was a permanent and indissoluble one.

Such are the statements respecting them in the former chapter; and in the passage before us they are brought before our minds as, though regenerate, by no means perfect; really, but far from being completely, holy; having much to part with, and much to attain to, before reaching “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” They have need to “lay aside malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings.” These words plainly imply that the old man, though mortified, is not

dead ; that, though crucified, he has not yet expired ; that there still clings to them, as the fatal robe to the fabled hero, a corrupted nature. The putrefying dead body is still attached to the living man, which draws out the deep groan, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There is still flesh as well as spirit, though in them the Spirit not only struggles, but prevails ; but in their flesh dwells nothing that is good—dwells all that is evil. Of course they need constant vigilance and energetic effort to prevent the encroachments, and to effect the eradication, of this evil principle.

§ 2. *Particular, figurative view of their state and character as "new-born babes."*

But it is chiefly on the figurative representation in the passage, "new-born babes," that I wish to fix your attention. The ideas suggested by these words, respecting those whom they describe, are, I apprehend, principally these three : They have undergone, lately undergone, an important and very beneficial change ; they are possessed of characters, of which some of the distinctive properties of infants are suitable emblems ; and while they are not what they once were, they also are not what they shall be—they are but "new-born babes,"—they are far from being men in stature, and vigour, and understanding, and acquirement, and enjoyment.

(1.) They have undergone a great and salutary change of state. They have been brought out of a state of darkness, and pollution, and confinement, into a state of light, and purity, and glorious liberty. They are in a new, a better, a higher state of spiritual and moral being. New spiritual faculties have been developed. They are in a new world. The Jewish doctors were accustomed to call their proselytes little children. The change from paganism

to Judaism was great and beneficial; but it was but an imperfect figure of the magnitude and blessedness of the change from nature to grace.

(2.) The term "new-born babes" seems intended to indicate character and disposition, as well as state and condition. To mark the distinctive character of his genuine disciples, our great Master states that they must become as "little children." When his disciples came to him, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? he "called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And on another occasion, when "they brought young children to him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them, Jesus, on seeing this, was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."¹ It has been common to find the points of analogy between Christians—especially young Christians, new converts—and little children, in comparative innocence and gentleness. But this, I apprehend, is to mistake our Lord's meaning. It is their conscious helplessness, their entire confiding dependence on others, their ready belief, as their faculties expand, of everything told them, till the falsehood of men teaches them distrust, that make infants fit emblems of the disciples of Christ. They "renounce themselves." They believe what he says to them, because he says it. They do what he bids them, because he bids them. They feel

¹ Matt. xviii. 3; xix. 13, 14.

that they are entirely dependent on Him, and they are well pleased that it should be so. They confide in Him, in his wisdom, in his power, in his grace, just as an affectionate child feels safe and happy in his father's house, or in his mother's arms, and takes no thought for himself, because he knows his father and mother will take thought for him; and never doubts either their affection for him, or their following out the dictates of that affection in protecting him from evil, and obtaining for him everything he needs.

As the reference here is to "new-born" infants, a leading idea intended to be conveyed to the mind seems to be, that, like new-born infants, the Christian has a kind of instinctive, unquenchable desire after the suitable spiritual aliment of his new nature. He loves the truth as it is in Jesus; he is restless when it is out of the view of the mind. The whole world without this cannot make him happy; and he never enjoys himself more, than when clearly apprehending the meaning and evidence of those "exceeding great and precious promises" by which his new nature is sustained; like the healthy infant on its mother's bosom, "he sucks, and is satisfied with these breasts of consolation; he milks out, and is delighted with the abundance of their glory."¹

(3.) There is yet another idea which we conceive the figurative appellation is calculated and intended to bring before our minds. Young Christians are very far from being what they are yet to be even on earth; and all Christians are very far from being what they will be in heaven.

The young convert is to grow in all Christian excellence—to "grow up in all things to him who is the head."² Paul was a very different person when it was at first said

¹ Isa. lxvi. 11,

² Eph. iv. 15.

of him, "Behold he prayeth"—a poor helpless sinner falling into the arms of the Saviour,—and when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."¹ And Paul even then was but a child in comparison of what Paul is now: the "spirit of a just man made perfect" "with the Lord," and fully, so far as his capacities admit, conformed to his mind and will, "like him, seeing him as he is."

This view of the subject is so beautifully illustrated by that heavenly man Leighton, that I can make no apology for the length of the following quotation: "The whole estate and course of the Christians' spiritual life here is called their infancy, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of their previous state, but likewise as signifying the weakness and imperfection of it at the best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as the highest degree falls short of the state of glory: so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And sure as for duration, the time of our present life is far less to eternity than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life; so that we may still be called but new or lately born. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory, the stately, graceful steps with which,

¹ Acts ix. 11; Phil. iv. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

on the heights of Zion, we shall walk in the light of the Lord; when 'we shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.' All our knowledge here is but the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God and of his praises are but as the first stammerings of children (which are, however, very pleasant both to child and parent), in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of him hereafter, 'when we shall know as we are known;' and of those praises we shall offer him, when that new song shall be taught us," which is sung before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and which none can learn but those who are redeemed from the earth.¹ "A child hath in it a reasonable soul; and yet, by the indisposedness of the body, and abundance of moisture, it is so bound up, that its difference from the beasts, and its partaking of a rational nature, is not so apparent as afterwards; and thus the spiritual life that is from above infused into a Christian, though it doth act and work in some degree, yet it is so clogged with natural corruption still remaining in him, that the excellency of it is much clouded and obscured: but in the life to come it shall have nothing at all encumbering and indisposing it. And this is the Apostle Paul's doctrine: 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.'²

"And this is the wonder of divine grace, that brings so small beginnings to that height of perfection that we are not able to conceive of; that a little spark of true grace,

¹ Rev. xiv. 3.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 9-12.

that is not only indiscernible to others, but often to the Christian himself, should yet be the beginning of that condition wherein they shall shine brighter than the sun in the firmament. The difference is great in our natural life, in some persons especially, that they who in infancy were so feeble and wrapped up like others in swaddling clothes, yet afterwards come to excel in wisdom and in the knowledge of the sciences, to be commanders of great armies, or to be kings: but the distance is far greater and more admirable, between the weakness of these new-born babes, the small beginnings of grace, and their after perfection, that fulness of knowledge that we look for, and that crown of immortality that all are born to who are born of God. But as in the faces and actions of some children, characters and presages of their after greatness have appeared, as a singular beauty in Moses' countenance, as they write of him, and as Cyrus was made king among the shepherd's children with whom he was brought up, so also certainly in these children of God there be some characters and evidences that they are born for heaven by their new birth. That holiness and meekness, that patience and faith, that shine in the actions and sufferings of the saints, are characters of their Father's image, and show their high original, and foretell their glory to come; such a glory as doth not only surpass the world's thoughts, but the thoughts of the children of God themselves. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.'"¹

Before proceeding further in the exposition, let me urge the importance of putting this question seriously to ourselves: What part or lot have I in this matter? What is my state before God? What is my spiritual character?

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

Have I been born again? Do I possess the instincts and dispositions of the new creature? The question is a serious one; for if I have not been born again, I am a stranger to true wisdom, worth, and happiness; and should I die, not having been born again, it had been better for me never to have been born. For, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹ He can neither enjoy the peculiar blessings of Christianity here nor hereafter. The question is one which should not be difficult to answer; for the characteristic qualities of the new creature are sufficiently palpable. There is one in particular, with regard to which no one can mistake without absolute wilfulness: "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world."² He lives above the world, through the power of faith. The terrors of the world cannot drive him, the blandishments of the world cannot allure him, from the course on which he has entered. When he became a new creature, he came into a new creation; and "the world to come," in its power, opening on his mind, delivered him from the dominant influence of "the present evil world." Are you looking at things seen and temporal? Are present and sensible things the chief subjects of your thoughts, the chief objects of your affections? Then you have been born only of the flesh. "Ye must be born again." You must be thoroughly changed; for if you are not so, you are quite unfit for heaven; and heaven would be no heaven to you, even were you placed in it. You must *repent*, that is, change your mind; for "except ye repent, ye *must* perish." There is no preventing it. The nature of things, the nature of God, require that it be so. But what hinders you from changing your mind? You are most assuredly wrong. Why should you not believe the truth clearly stated, abundantly accredited? "Repent, and believe the gospel." And in repent-

¹ John iii. 3.² 1 John v. 4.

ing, and believing the gospel, ye will be "born again," "transformed by the renewing of your minds;" and "being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth for ever," you will become as "new-born babes," and will feel, what you cannot now do, how reasonable and right it is that ye "should desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" and "growing up into him in all things who is the Head," shall become every day while in the world more like him while he was in the world—in it, not of it; and at the appointed season, along with all the brethren, when he appears, shall be made, so far as the difference of your nature admits, like him, "seeing him as he is."

And you who through the agency of the Spirit, and the instrumentality of the word, have been born again, and become as little children, cultivate the childlike character. Confide in your heavenly Father's wisdom, power, grace, and faithfulness; trust not to your own understanding; implicitly believe his declarations, unhesitatingly comply with his injunctions. "Be anxious about nothing;" your heavenly Father knows what you need, and can deliver you out of every trial. But while you cultivate the childlike character, seek in connection with it the vigour and activity of mature manhood. "In malice" be always "children, but in understanding be men." Seek to have your spiritual "senses exercised, to discern truth and falsehood, good and evil." With the simplicity of childhood join the sagacity of age; and while in one sense ye always are children, become more and more children; in another, "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" but seek to arrive at "the unity of the faith and knowledge of the

Son of God, at perfect manhood, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."¹ Brethren, we are glad when ye are "strong, through the word of God abiding in you," and enabling you to overcome the wicked one; and "this also we wish, even your perfection;" and this we pray, that "your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things which are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ: being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."²

So much for answer to the first question proposed, Who are the persons to whom the exhortation in the text is addressed?

II. THE EXHORTATION.

Let us now attend to the exhortation itself: "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The exhortation is twofold; first dissuasive, and then persuasive. The dissuasive exhortation is in these words: "Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil-speaking,"—an exhortation to seek complete freedom from sin in all its forms and in all its degrees, and particularly in those forms which interfere with the great Christian duty of brotherly love, which the apostle had just been enjoining and recommending. The persuasive part of the exhortation is in these words: "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This exhortation resolves itself into two parts: 1. Seek spiritual growth; seek to grow wiser,

¹ Heb. v. 14; Eph. iv. 14, 15.

² 1 John ii. 14; 2 Cor. xiii. 9; Phil. i. 9-11.

better, happier; seek wider, more accurate, more influential views of divine truth; a firmer faith; deeper humility; a more assured hope; a warmer zeal; a more expanded operative benevolence; in one word, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And 2. Seek spiritual growth by appropriate means; desire "the sincere," the uncorrupted, and undeceiving appropriate nutriment of the new man, the "milk of the word," or the rational milk; the nutriment suited to a rational immortal being in the season of the development of its faculties. There is a connection, too, between the dissuasive and persuasive parts of the exhortation, which will require to be noticed, to prevent mistakes, and to secure all the advantages which the inspired counsel is calculated to communicate. Such is the outline I mean to fill up in the succeeding illustrations.

§ 1. *The Dissuasive Exhortation.*

Let us attend, then, in the first place, to the dissuasive part of the exhortation. "Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings."

(1.) The first evil habit against which the apostle warns is "malice."¹ It is the same word which is frequently in the New Testament rendered "wickedness," and sometimes stands for moral evil in all its forms and degrees, as in Acts viii. 22, "Repent of thy wickedness," and at ver. 16 of this chapter, where Balaam is said to have been reprov'd for his "iniquity;" and some interpreters have understood it so here, as if the apostle had said, Lay aside every form of evil, all error, all impiety, all malignity, every form of improper desire or pursuit; and, as if the other terms mentioned were merely explanatory of this general one, different forms of wickedness. At the same time, the word is often in the New Testament used to describe a

¹ *κακία*.

particular form of moral evil, and is not unfrequently employed as one of a number of words, all expressive of different modifications of sinful principle and conduct.¹ I have no doubt that here it is equivalent to malignity, or ill-will, or malevolent disposition.

Self-love is a leading principle in human nature. In depraved human nature, this useful, necessary principle is in excess—supreme instead of subordinate. Self-love thus becomes selfishness, and being connected with false views of our own interest, which we are led to think inconsistent with that of others, takes the form of malignity, ill-will towards others whose interests seem to stand in the way of our own. This disposition is the very reverse of the love which leads to the fulfilling of the law in reference to our fellow-men. If that is “the fulfilling,” this is the violation of the law; for if love doeth, can do, no injury to a brother, malice, ill-will, can do him no good, and will do him all the harm which it finds necessary to gain its mere selfish objects.

(2.) The objects malice seeks are not such as can creditably be avowed and prosecuted. Malice, therefore, naturally leads to “guile” or deceit, the second of the evil habits denounced by the apostle. The word is descriptive of all fraudulent, deceitful means for gaining an end; it is a general name for all untruthfulness and dishonesty, from their most refined to their grossest forms. To manage these deceits with any probability of success, a man must not appear to be what he is: he must act a part, he must be a hypocrite, a stage-player. The known open liar, the notoriously dishonest person, has little power to deceive. When Satan would deceive, he assumes the appearance of “an angel of light.” When our Lord’s enemies sought to entrap him, they “sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just

¹ Rom. i. 29; Eph. iv. 31; Col. iii. 8; Tit. iii. 3; James i. 21.

men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him to the power and authority of the governor."¹ Here you see malice leading to deceit, and deceit to "hypocrisy."

(3.) The "hypocrisy" here forbidden is the pretending to be what we are not; to have excellences, or degrees of excellence, of which we are destitute; to have respect or affection, when we have it not, or to have it in a degree far beyond what we really feel. As the opposite of malice is love, and of deceit uprightness; so the opposite of hypocrisy is sincerity, the speaking the truth as it is in the heart, the expressing in language and conduct our real sentiments and feelings, the being in appearance what we are in reality.

(4.) "Envy" is the fourth evil disposition which the apostle requires to be laid aside. It is the natural effect of malice, or ill-will. The word properly signifies the uneasiness which a malignant man feels in the happiness of the object of his ill-will, and the restless, painful desire he has to deprive him of his advantages, especially of those which he possesses in larger measure than the malevolent person himself. It is the corruption of the natural principle of emulation, or the desire to excel, which seeks its gratification fully as much in bringing its object below our level, as in raising ourselves honourably to his level, or above it; and one of the most ordinary methods which it employs, in order to gain this unworthy end, is the fifth and last bad habit from which the apostle here dissuades.

(5.) "Evil-speakings." Calumnious slander is the worst form of this evil; but all whisperings and backbitings, all sly insinuations, hinting at faults and hesitating dislike, every species of statement having for its object the lowering the reputation of another, which justice does not re-

¹ Luke xx. 20.

quire, as well as truth warrant, are included.¹ The mouth is as it were the vent through which the smoke and flames of the infernal fire of malice and envy, which rages as in a furnace within, escape, polluting and withering all around.

Such are the evil tempers and habits which the apostle dissuades from. You see how closely they are connected, how naturally the one produces the other; and you must observe how all of them are directly opposed to that "sincere fervent love" which he had been, and still is, inculcating, as one of the Christian's first duties.

The exhortation of the apostle is, "Lay aside these evil tempers and habits." This exhortation strongly implies that those addressed had been originally depraved, wholly depraved beings, and that they were still partially under the influence of depravity. The exhortation is not, Beware of putting these on, but, Put them off. Every renewed man has in his flesh his unrenewed nature,—the evil heart,—the seminal principle of every species of moral evil; and I do not know what is the sin which, if he is unwatchful, unprayerful, exposed to temptation, and unrestrained by divine influence, he may not commit. Such exhortations to regenerate persons loudly proclaim, "Be vigilant;" repress the first movements of evil; shun even its appearance: "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."²

The exhortation of the apostle is, not to cover these unsightly deformities of the old man with the veil of an assumed courteousness and politeness, or sanctimony. In his estimation, and in that of his Master, these were, however admired by men, abominable in God's sight, being but

¹ Πάσαι καταλαλῆς. Multis modis committitur detractio, aut bonum negando, aut obfuscando, aut diminuendo, aut malum ascribendo, aut intentionem in bono opere pervertendo.—JO. HUS.

² 1 Pet. i. 8; 1 Cor. x. 12.

forms of that hypocrisy which he so pointedly condemns. To do this were to add iniquity to iniquity. The exhortation is to "lay them aside." The object of Christianity is not to conceal the evil which still exists, and exists it may be but in the greater force, acts but with the greater virulence, because it is concealed; but it is to destroy it, so that there may be no need of concealment, because there is nothing to conceal.

The apostle does not require the modification, but the extinction, of those evil principles. The filthy rags must not be mended, and in some measure purified; they are to be put off, and cast away. Christian morality is very uncompromising. Those polluted vestments, fast as they may cling to the diseased mind, must be torn off. Every one of them—all malice, all guile, hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking—must be put off. There is no exception; all sin, in all its forms and in all its degrees, must be abandoned, abandoned for ever. It is impossible to read this passage without being impressed with the inward, thorough character of the Christian morality, the spirituality of "the royal law," "the law of Christ." "Malice and envy" are forbidden, as well as "guile, and hypocrisies, and evil-speaking."

And you will observe, too, the order in which the prohibition stands. In the world's morality, they set about pruning the branches while the root is undisturbed; and the evil tree is often rather strengthened than weakened by the process; but here "the axe is laid to the root of the tree." Lay aside *malice*. If that is laid aside, deceit and hypocrisy will soon disappear, and never reappear. Destroy the root; the leaves, and even the stem, will soon wither and die. Lay aside envies, and there will be no evil-speaking. Such is the import of the dissuasive part of the exhortation.

And now, my brethren, let us open our hearts to the word of exhortation here addressed to us. Let us not turn aside from these statements, as too plain and common-place to deserve much consideration. Do some say, We know all this already? I answer with my Master, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" but if ye do them not, it had been better for you that you had not known them. The preaching of Christian doctrine and law is intended for some other, some nobler purpose, than to add to the stock of what has been termed "men's speculative discoursing knowledge." There is something wrong, either with the minister or the people, it may be with both, when plain christianly moral discourses are not delivered, or not relished. It was a proof of anything but growth in spiritual strength, when the Israelites loathed the daily manna, called it dry food, and required flesh to satisfy their lust. It is a very bad sign of a man if he does not like a plain practical sermon. "There is," as one well remarks, "an intemperance of the mind as well as the mouth. You would think, and may be not spare to call it a poor cold sermon, that was made up of such plain precepts as those which have been the subject of discourse. And yet this is the language of God; it is his way, this foolish despicable way, by which he guides and brings to heaven them that believe."¹

Let us never forget that Christianity is the religion of love and the religion of truth. The spirit which the Father hath given us is the spirit of meekness and charity. That dovelike spirit dwelt without measure in our Head, and by him is communicated in various degrees to all his members. "If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his."² Let us remember that the true way to put off malice is to put on charity; and the true way to put on charity is to

¹ Leighton.² Rom. viii. 9.

put on Christ, so as that the mind which was in him may be in us.

Let us then "walk in love," and in truth as well as in love. Let us put off all deceits and hypocrisies. There is a meanness in hypocrisy which should make us despise it, a folly in it which should make us ashamed of it, as well as an impiety in it which should make us abhor it. Oh, "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"¹ "What avails it to wear this mask? A man may indeed, in the sight of men, act his part handsomely under it; but know we not, that there is an eye that sees through it, and a hand which, if we will not put off this mask, will pull it off to our shame either here in the sight of men, or if we should escape all our life, and go fair off the stage under it, yet there is a day appointed when all hypocrites will be unveiled, and appear what they are indeed, before men and angels? It is a poor thing to be approved or even applauded by men, while God condemns, by whose sentence all must stand or fall. Let us seek to be approved and justified by him, and then who shall condemn? It does not matter who do. Oh, how lightly may the contempt and reproaches of men lie on us, if we are but secure of his approbation! It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; there is one that judgeth me, that is, the Lord."²

There is a common, and I am afraid by no means unfounded, complaint, that many hearers of the word are wholly unfruitful, and that others are little edified. Our text furnishes us with the true account of this melancholy fact. They do not "lay aside malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings." Till they do so, though they were under the ministry of an angel, they would never receive the sincere milk of the word, that they

¹ Job xxvii. 8.

² Leighton.

might grow thereby. Those who wish to get good from the word of God, must guard against all those tempers which war with truth and love.

There is no keeping out of controversy at all times in our world, without sacrificing truth; but controversy is full of hazards. Alas! how seldom is it conducted, even on substantially the right side, without "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings!" And so strangely deluded are men, that they often seem to think that the more they are under the influence of those unchristian principles, while professedly, and it may be really, contending for Christian truth, so much the better Christians are they. They seem to measure their love for the truth, by their hatred of those who they suppose are opposing it. I trust we, my brethren, have not so learned Christ; but that "having heard him, and been taught of him the truth as it is in Jesus, we are putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and are renewed in the spirit of our minds; putting on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; and putting away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice." Then will "the word of Christ dwell in us richly," and then will the light of God shine in our minds, and "the peace of God rule in our hearts."¹

§ 2. *The Persuasive Exhortation.*

The persuasive part of the exhortation comes now before us for consideration: "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."² This exhortation

¹ Eph. iv. 20-24, 31; Col. iii. 15, 16.

² It is right to notice that the words *eis σωτηρίαν*—"unto salvation"—follow *ἵνα ἡ ἀρετὴ αὐξηθῇ*, "that ye may grow thereby," in most of the Codd. and old translations, and that all the great critical editors of the

refers both to an end, and to the means by which this end is to be accomplished. The end is the attainment of spiritual growth, and the means, the taking spiritual nourishment. Thus the exhortation naturally divides itself into two parts: (1) Seek spiritual growth, that is the end; and (2) "Desire the sincere milk of the word," that is the means; for it is by the right use of this appropriate nourishment that spiritual growth is to be attained. Let us look at these two exhortations, first separately, and then in their relation to each other.

(1.) The first exhortation is, Seek spiritual growth. The figurative view of the state and character of the persons addressed, "new-born babes," and the corresponding view of their daily "growth," suggest the ideas of life, of faculty, and of imperfection. What is dead cannot grow; what is perfect does not need to grow. Life is necessary to growth; vegetable life to vegetable growth, animal life to animal growth, rational life to rational growth, spiritual life to spiritual growth. The still-born babe never grows. It is the living new-born babe that grows. Till a man is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," even of that word which in the gospel is preached to us, he is destitute of spiritual life, and therefore he is incapable of spiritual growth. On all such men the declaration of our Lord must be urged: "Ye must be born again," "ye must repent and be converted." The persons addressed here are plainly persons who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, having been brought to

New Testament, with the exception of Mill, consider them as entitled to a place in the text. They do not materially change the sense. They mark salvation—complete deliverance from evil in every form and degree—as the end of spiritual growth, and spiritual growth through the use of the *γάλα λογικόν* as the appointed means of salvation. The phrase *εἰς σωτηρίαν* may be thus resolved: *εἰς τὸ συγχάαναι ὑμᾶς τῇ σωτηρίᾳ*, "that you may thus obtain salvation."—Eph. iv. 13.

believe the saving truth, have undergone a radical change of mind and heart, of sentiment and disposition. They are spiritually alive, they can perform the functions of spiritual living beings, they are capable of spiritual growth.

But the idea of imperfection is just as plainly suggested by the figurative language of the text as that of capacity. They are living beings; but the principle of life, though unextinguishable, is as yet feeble. They need to grow. They have not been all at once brought into a state of spiritual perfection. Their emblem is not Adam, proceeding from the hand of God in all the completeness of manhood; it is the new-born babe. And they need not only to grow, but to grow a great deal. They are not represented as youths just approaching manhood, they are "new-born babes." They have entered on their course, but only entered. Even in the case of those who have proceeded furthest, what is behind is as nothing in comparison of what is before them. They have "not attained." This is the testimony respecting himself of one who had made more progress perhaps than any other. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."¹

But we have said enough of what is presupposed in the injunction, to "grow as new-born babes." Let us now inquire into its meaning. What is it, then, to grow? For the natural new-born babe to grow, is to increase in size and strength and beauty and intelligence, and in the active, graceful use of all its various faculties. For the spiritual new-born babe to grow, is to increase in the knowledge of the only true God and his Son Jesus, which is eternal life, obtaining more extensive, more accurate, more influential views on this boundlessly extensive and infinitely important subject; in the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus; in the love of God, of Christ, of the brethren, of all mankind; in

¹ Phil. iii. 12.

reliance on the free grace of the Father, the finished work of the Son, the promised aids of the Spirit ; in knowledge and heartfelt conviction of his own worthlessness and helplessness, weakness and folly ; in deep humility ; in hatred of sin ; in vigilance against temptation ; in love of holiness ; in zeal for the divine honour ; in growing delight in God as the portion of the soul ; in weanedness from the world ; in a spirit of self-sacrifice for God's glory and man's salvation ; in desire for the pure peace, the holy happiness of heaven ; and by the growth of these principles, "being strengthened with all might in the inner man," to become more alert and constant and persevering in performing all the functions of the new life, both inward and outward ; doing and suffering the will of God ; "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless ;" "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ;" walking at liberty, keeping God's commandments, "fighting the good fight of faith," running "the race that is set before him."

Growth in the knowledge of Christian truth is that on which spiritual growth generally depends. The great influential principles of saving truth are few and simple, and some are apt to think that they are easily and soon fully learned. But this is a dangerous mistake. The oldest and most intelligent Christian may grow in the knowledge of these truths. It is a very important remark, that after a man is really converted, growth in knowledge consists chiefly in knowing better the very truths by which conversion has been produced. He may see more deeply into the meaning of those truths which he had only a general notion of ; he may see additional evidence of their truth ; he may see more of their mutual connection and dependence ; he may see more of the uses they are intended to serve ; he may obtain more skill in turning them to their proper use,

both to himself and others; he may obtain a more deep and extensive experimental acquaintance with them, and he may rise to a much higher esteem for and love of them. The most important kind of growth in knowledge to a true Christian, is to grow in the knowledge of what he does know, rather than to grow in knowledge by acquiring an acquaintance with something that he does not know. The addition of some degrees to the more needful parts of knowledge which we already possess, will go further to promote spiritual growth, than the acquisition of knowledge respecting less necessary things, of which we are ignorant. Every Christian knows the doctrine of Christ crucified; but many a Christian knows little about scholastic questions respecting the decrees of God, and the subjects of baptism and the government of the church. His spiritual growth will be more impeded by imperfection in the knowledge of the former, than by absolute ignorance of the latter; and his spiritual growth will be more advanced by knowing a little more of that which he already knows, than by obtaining even the most accurate information on the points of which he is ignorant. It is an admirable observation of an old divine, "There is enough in one of the articles of our faith, in one of God's attributes, in one of Christ's benefits, in one of the Spirit's graces, to hold you in study all your lives, and afford you still an increase of knowledge. To know God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their relations to you, and operations for you, and your duties to them, and the way of communion with them, is a knowledge in which we may, we must, be still growing, till it be perfected by the celestial beatifical vision."¹

It is difficult to conceive a finer or more complete description of what spiritual growth is, than that embodied in a prayer by the Apostle Paul for the Philippian Chris-

¹ Baxter.

tians : " And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."¹ To use the words of one far advanced towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," "That Christian is a growing Christian who abounds more and more in the varied exercises of that holy love which is the fulfilment of this royal law; whose love is directed and regulated by increasing knowledge, wisdom, and judgment; who acquires by exercise, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the habit of prudently examining and accurately distinguishing between the things that differ, abhorring the evil, and cleaving to the good more entirely and heartily from day to day; who becomes more known and approved for sincerity and integrity in all his professions and engagements, and more singly devoted to God, as he advances in years; who becomes more and more circumspect in his words and works, that he may neither inadvertently fall himself nor cause others to stumble; who becomes more fervent in prayer, to be preserved from bringing any reproach on the gospel to the end of his course; who becomes more abundantly fruitful in the works of righteousness, while at the same time he lies lower before God in deep humility, and is more willing than ever to be abased among men; who acts more and more habitually with the invisible God and the eternal world before his mind, and relies more entirely on the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus, who thus becomes more precious to his soul; whose dependence on the providence of God becomes more uniform, and accompanied with greater composure, submission, and constancy in the

¹ Phil. i. 9-11.

path of duty. This is the growing Christian. Nothing material to the Christian character seems wanting. The various holy dispositions and affections, resulting from regeneration, are advancing to maturity in just proportion and coincidence, and he is evidently ripening for the work, worship, and joy of heaven."¹ Take another representation of spiritual growth by our apostle himself. He grows spiritually, who having been called to glory and virtue, and made a partaker of a divine nature, through the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel understood and believed by him, "adds to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; who has these things in him, and abounding in him, and is not idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."²

We have now got the general idea of spiritual growth; it is just progressive sanctification. Grow spiritually, is in plain terms, Become more and more holy. But we shall fail of getting all the instruction which the inspired writer's words are intended and fitted to convey, if we do not inquire whether there are not some important truths, in reference to progressive holiness, suggested by the figurative view here given of it. Are there not certain points of resemblance between natural growth and progressive holiness, which deserve notice? We apprehend there are, and principally the following. Both are, in the sense proper to them, natural; both are gradual, and upon the whole constant; both are universal, and generally simultaneous; and both of them are perceptible, and sometimes more perceptible to others than to their subject. A word or two of illustration on these instructive points of resemblance, is all that is necessary.

¹ Scott.

² 2 Pet. i. 5-7.

1. It is the order of the natural world for the child to grow. It is the order of the spiritual world for the saint to improve. An infant not growing, but wasting away, is an unnatural and melancholy object; and still more unnatural, still more melancholy, is it for one who seems to be a saint to be seen becoming no wiser, no better, or, more deplorable still, becoming worse. There is want of nourishment, or disease, in both cases, where there is not growth. Truth, it has been said, does not lie in the heart as a stone on the earth, but as seed in the earth which naturally germinates.

2. Growth is gradual, very gradual; and so is Christian improvement. No infant becomes a man at once, but every day sees him nearer manhood; and so is it in the spiritual world. The saint becomes gradually wiser and better. Like the child, he makes more progress at some times than others; yet in all cases the progress is gentle, not sudden. And as, when in health, the child is always growing, so, when the Christian is not labouring under spiritual disease, he is always making progress.

3. When the child grows, the whole of its body and mind grows. Swelling, which is a diseased, unnatural affection, may be confined to a part of the body, but natural growth extends to the whole of it. And so it is with the spiritual new-born babe. He grows in knowledge, and faith, and holiness, and comfort, at the same time. And the growth in both cases, where things are as they ought to be, is proportional. It also deserves notice, that though there be general growth, if any part of the system be preternaturally active, if any member of the body is preternaturally enlarged, any faculty of the mind preternaturally developed, there is disease and disorder. And so it is in the spiritual world. If the understanding be enlightened while the affections are not proportionally affected, or if the affections are strongly excited while the understanding is not propor-

tionally enlightened, there is no healthy growth, no satisfactory progress. Healthy nourishment in a healthy constitution, whether bodily or mental, natural or spiritual, produces both universal and simultaneous growth.

4. Where there is real growth, it will be perceptible; not perceptible in its progress, but perceptible in its effects. In the case of a healthy child, he who sees it when new-born, and when it is a twelvemonth old, distinctly perceives that there has been growth. In the same way, a person who sees a young convert, if he meets with him months or years after, will perceive progress both in knowledge and in holiness. The child is seldom sensible of growth. It requires to look back, and compare what it is now with what it recollects itself to have been, to convince it of its having grown. And so it is with the spiritual babe. It is only by comparing what he now is with what he was at some previous period, that he can be convinced that he is making progress. Indeed, not unfrequently, from the increase both of spiritual sensibility and spiritual perspicacity, he feels as if, instead of becoming better, he were becoming worse. He is, in his own feelings, less conformed to the divine law as he now sees it, than he was, it may be years ago, as he then saw it. And yet this may be, indeed is, one of the best proofs that there is progress in knowledge, both of God's law and of himself; and in a corresponding humility and growing dependence on the atonement as the ground of acceptance, and on the Spirit as the fountain of holiness. The sight Christians have of their defects in grace, and their thirst after greater measures of grace, make them think that they do not grow when indeed they do.¹

A healthy child grows without thinking much about its growth. It takes its food and its exercise, and finds that it is growing in the increase of its strength, and its capacity

¹ Watson.

for exertion. And an analogous state is, I believe, the healthiest state of the spiritual new-born babe. While self-examination, rightly managed, is very useful, a morbid desire of the satisfaction of knowing that we are improving, is in danger of drawing the mind away from the constant employment of the means of spiritual nourishment and health. The best state of things is, when, in the healthy vigorous condition of the spiritual constitution, ready for every good work, we have the evidence in ourselves that we are growing; and when that is wanting, application to the sincere milk of the word will do a great deal more good than poring into ourselves, to find proof either that we are growing or not growing. So much for the first part of the persuasive exhortation, 'Seek spiritual growth.'

(2.) The second part of the exhortation refers to the means for gaining this end—spiritual growth. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There are here three things which we must attend to:—
1. What is this sincere milk of the word? 2. How is it that we grow by it? 3. And what is it to desire this sincere milk of the word?

1. The phrase "milk of the word" is singular, and a variety of opinions have been entertained both as to its reference and meaning. If we can certainly fix the first, there will be comparatively little difficulty in apprehending the second. Some, among whom we are surprised to find the judicious Calvin, have supposed that the reference is to those Christian virtues which stand in direct opposition to the vices which are condemned in the previous verse; but these cannot well be represented as the spiritual food of the spiritual new-born babe. They are rather the symptoms that the food has produced its proper effect in the bloom and vigour of a healthful frame. The inspired writer

furnishes us with the means of determining the reference. Whatever the milk of the word be, it is that by which spiritual new-born babes are nourished ; in plainer words, it is that by which the sanctification and holy happiness of the regenerate soul are promoted. Now there can be no doubt that that is divine truth understood and believed. It is "by this that men live; in this is the life of our souls." "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth," says our Lord. "Purifying their hearts by faith," says the Apostle Peter. "Grace, mercy, and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of this truth."¹ "It is by unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, that we come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," says the Apostle Paul.²

The reference then, without doubt, is to the truth respecting the divine character revealed in the Holy Scriptures ; but what is the precise meaning of the phrase, "the milk of the word ?" The milk is plainly equivalent to the appropriate nourishment ; what serves the same purpose to Christians, especially new converts, that the mother's milk does to the new-born babe. The "milk of the word" may either mean the spiritual nourishment which is contained in that word spoken of in the previous context, "the word of the Lord which liveth and abideth for ever, the word of the gospel preached to us ;" or it may mean rational nourishment, nourishment suited to the rational spiritual nature of man, as milk is to his physical or animal nature ;³ just as the same word is employed in Rom. xii. 1, "reasonable

¹ Cicero, speaking of intellectual life, says, "*Est animorum ingeniorumque nostrorum naturale quoddam quasi pabulum consideratio contemplatioque natura.*"

² John xvii. 17 ; Acts xv. 9 ; 2 Pet. i. 2 ; Eph. iv. 13.

³ Λογικὸν in contrast with φυσικόν. "Τὸ λογικὸν id est μυστικόν, τὸ νοητὸν." —Rom. xii. 1. *Spirituale*, bene vertit Syrus.—GROTIUS. Geistlich.—LUTHER.

service,"¹ rather rational worship; the presenting our bodies living sacrifices being contrasted with the animal sacrifices under the Old Testament dispensation. It does not matter which interpretation we prefer, both bringing out a truth, and an important and appropriate one.

Spiritual truth is compared to milk; to intimate its simplicity, its pleasantness to the unsophisticated spiritual palate, and its tendency to produce spiritual growth.

This milk of the word is described by the apostle as "sincere." The application of the term seems strange, sincerity being with us always considered as a moral, not a physical attribute—a quality not of things, but of persons. It is one of the comparatively rare instances of the use of a word in an obsolete sense in our translation. The original word, when applied to persons, or figuratively to things, means undeceiving; when applied to things in a proper sense, it means pure, unmixed, unadulterated. In either sense it is very applicable. The word of God is pure truth, without the slightest admixture of error; it is only in the degree in which this pure truth is contained in any statement, that that statement is spiritually nourishing; and this pure word is undeceiving; it does what it professes to do, it really nourishes. "It converts the soul, it makes wise the simple, it rejoices the heart, it enlightens the eyes." It "is able to build us up;" "to save the soul."²

2. These remarks may suffice to give us a distinct apprehension of the meaning of the terms; but it is required that we look a little deeper into the subject, and inquire how it is that the spiritual new-born babe grows by this pure, undeceiving milk of the word; how divine truth produces spiritual growth. It does not operate as a charm. The power of truth to sanctify the believer is just as much a part of the order of the spiritual world as the power of milk

¹ Λογικὴν λατρίαν.

² Ps. xix. 7; James i. 21.

to nourish the new-born babe is of the order of the natural world. It is easy to see that spiritual knowledge can be increased just as it was originally obtained, only by means of the only revelation of spiritual truth being apprehended by the mind; how faith can grow only by a growing apprehension of the truth which is the object of faith, and of the evidence which is the ground of faith. It is the representation of the loveliness and amiableness of God contained in the word, understood and believed, that produces love and confidence in him. It is the representation of his awful majesty and infinite holiness which produces reverence. It is the view it gives us of sin and of ourselves that produces humility and watchfulness. The precepts show us what to be and to do; and the promises and warnings furnish us with powerful motives to comply with the precepts, and thus make us, both in character and conduct, what God would have us to be. Every portion of divine truth is intended and calculated to tell on the growth of some portion of the new man; on the development of some of his faculties, the strengthening of some of his energies, the beautifying of some of his features. To borrow a figure from the Apostle Paul, divine truth or doctrine is the mould in which the new creature is cast,¹ and every portion of it leaves a corresponding impression. "Truths are the seal, the soul is the wax, and holiness is the impression made by the seal on the wax."²

3. Now, the exhortation of the apostle to those whom he addresses is, that they should "Desire" this unadulterated, undeceiving nourishment, in order to their growth. The force of the exhortation, "Desire" the sincere milk of the word, is, 'See that ye feel and act in reference to that truth which is the nourishment of your souls, as new-born infants do in reference to that which is the appropriate nutriment

¹ Τύπον διδασκῆς εἰς δὲ περιέθετε.—Rom. vi. 17.

² Baxter.

of their bodies. Desire it as new-born babes: show that you cannot do without it; that you must have it; that nothing will do as a substitute; that you relish it; that you are satisfied with it; that you never weary of it; that you return to it again and again, with unabated, with ever-increasing delight.¹ The temper enjoined is that which is so beautifully embodied in the "burning words" of David, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I will meditate in thy precepts. I will delight myself in thy statutes. I will never forget thy word. My soul breaketh, for the longing it hath at all times unto thy judgments. Grant me thy law graciously. I have stuck to thy testimonies. I have longed after thy precepts. I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I love. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. I will never forget thy precepts; for by them hast thou quickened me. How sweet are thy words to my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. Give me understanding, and I shall live. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness. Give me understanding according to thy word. My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteous-

¹ 'ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα. Ut modogeniti qui nihil aliud agunt; tantum appetunt.—BENGEL. 'Ὁσαυτὶ γὰρ τὰ ἀπρίονα τῶν βρεφῶν οὐδὲς διδάσκει τὴν τροφήν, αὐτόματα δὲ ἱκανοῦνται καὶ οἶδιν ἐν τοῖς μαζοῖς εὖσθαι αὐτοῖς τὴν τροφήν.—Achilles Tatius, l. i. cit. ab. Elsner.

ness. I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight. More to be desired are the judgments of God than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." I think no one now can have any difficulty in understanding what it is to "desire the sincere milk of the word as new-born babes." O that we all knew more of it by our own personal experience! In this case we should be both better and happier men.

Fully to apprehend the force of the apostle's exhortation, we must connect the exercise enjoined with the end for which it is enjoined. Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. "Desire the word," says the pious Leighton, "not that ye may only hear it; that is to fall very short of its true end. Yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word, as Elihu compares it. 'The ear heareth words as the mouth tasteth meat;' but meat that goes no further than the mouth cannot nourish.~ Neither ought this desire of the word to be only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamour more for the gross impiety of contemning it—this is not to hear it out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it: that there is delight in it, may commend it to those who find it so, and so be a means to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more but a present delight, that vanisheth with the sound by the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as music. To desire the word for the mere increase of spiritual knowledge, or for

the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourses, is still to miss the true end. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, while all the rest of the body stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster: and they are no other, that are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God." Our object in desiring the sincere milk of the word, in studying with intense interest the truth as revealed in the word of God, is, that we may, as men of God, be "thoroughly furnished for every good work."¹

The dissuasive and the persuasive parts of the exhortation are closely connected. "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The idea intended to be conveyed by thus connecting the two exhortations, is not that the one must be fully complied with before we can obey the other,—that we must get rid of all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, before we at all "desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." The true view of the matter is, that the two parts of the exhortation must be obeyed at the same time. A man full of "malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings," cannot "desire the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." A man who "desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby," cannot be clothed in malice, and other evil habits. The two exercises mutually influence each other. Nothing can displace "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and evil-speakings," but truth believed. But the putting off of malice, and the other evil habits, greatly promotes desire of the sincere milk of the word; while, just as we yield to this

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

desire, "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and all other evil habits, are put off. The body cannot grow in a fever, the soul cannot thrive where sinful dispositions are cherished : yet it is returning health which expels disease. It is just like some other scriptural injunctions. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well:" we cannot cease to do evil but in the degree in which we learn to do well; and in the degree in which we cease to do evil, do we learn to do well. "Repent, and believe the gospel:" it is the gospel, coming into the mind in its meaning and evidence, that changes the mind; and it is in that change of mind that we believe the gospel.

If you have listened attentively, I think you can scarcely have failed to gain a distinct apprehension of the meaning of the exhortation which has been the subject of discourse. The important question is, Have you complied, are you complying, with the exhortation?

I turn, first, to those who have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," and I ask them, Have you not much need to grow? Are you not yet very infantine, babes when you ought to have been young men, if not fathers? Have you not much need to grow in knowledge? Are you able "to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the faith and hope that are in you?" Does "the word of Christ dwell in you in all wisdom?" Have you clear, satisfactory views of the economy of mercy, of the system of divine truth? Can you "discern the things that differ, so as to approve the things which are excellent?" Have not too many of us reason to say, when "for the time we ought to have been teachers, we have need that some one teach us again what be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat?"¹

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15; Col. iii. 16; Phil. i. 10; Heb. v. 12-14.

Have you not need to grow in holiness? Is there not much wanting, much wrong? Have you no corrupt propensities to resist and subdue? Are you "strong in faith?" Do you "abound in hope?" Does "the love of God reign in your hearts?" Have you "overcome the world?" Are you "clothed with humility?" Is your worship always spiritual, and your obedience impartial, habitual, universal, cheerful? Have you not cause to say, "My leanness, my leanness! my soul cleaveth to the dust?"¹

Have you not need to grow in holy happiness? Have you, "believing, entered into rest?" Are you "anxious for nothing?" Do you habitually "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement?" Are you able to "glory in tribulation?" to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Do you "walk in the light of God's countenance, rejoice in his name all the day, and are you exalted in his righteousness?" or are you not beset with doubts and perplexities, walking in darkness, and having but little light?

It is intended that you should grow. An infant is not born to continue an infant, for that were to be a monster, but to grow up to manhood. If you do not grow, it is not because growth is unnecessary. There are labours and trials before you, which will require the vigour and intelligence of manhood. To perform these labours aright, to endure these trials aright, you must "quit yourselves like men, and be strong."²

Now on all who feel that they need to grow, and are sensible of the importance of growth, I would press the exhortation of the apostle, "Desire the sincere milk of the word." Alas, what a multitude of dwarfs, as Richard Baxter says, has Christ, that are but like infants, though

¹ Rom. iv. 19, xv. 13; 1 John v. 4; 1 Pet. v. 5; Isa. xxiv. 16; Ps. cxix. 25.

² Heb. iv. 3; Phil. iv. 6; Rom. v. 3, 11; Isa. l. 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

they have numbered ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even sixty years of spiritual life ! Go not to yourselves, go not to your fellows ; go to God in his word for his Spirit, and seek growth there. That is the only way to grow. True holiness, true happiness, can be obtained in no other way. Various methods may be employed, various methods have been employed, to produce the feeling and the appearance of spiritual health and growth. But in vain. Men may by other methods be bolstered up in vain confidence, amused with delusive joys ; but they cannot be made really happy. They may be brought to make a fair show in the flesh ; but they cannot be made really holy. The "milk of the word," the unadulterated milk of the word, is the only wholesome nourishment of the new-born soul. Divine truth lodged in the mind and heart, by the influence of the good Spirit, is the only well of living water which will spring up unto eternal life. Seek, then, to "grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." "Let his word dwell in you richly, in all wisdom ;" and under its influence, "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."¹

We your ministers have a subordinate, yet still an important part to perform, in promoting your growth in grace. It consists chiefly in "holding forth to you the word of life," in bringing before your mind, and keeping before your mind, "the truth as it is in Jesus ;" and it is our earnest desire not to handle this word of the Lord deceitfully, but, "in the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God ;" for we trust "we are not as many which corrupt the word of God," adulterate the sincere milk of the word, "but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." "Teaching every man in all wisdom, we would fain present

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 18 ; Col. iii. 16, i. 10.

every man perfect in Christ Jesus." May our wishes be realized ; may our labours not be in vain ! " May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever."¹

But there are those here, I am afraid, whom I cannot call on to *grow*, for they are dead ; nay, I am afraid there may be some here who are " twice dead, plucked up by the roots." I cannot call on you to come to the word that you may grow, but I do call on you to come to the word that you may *live* ; for that word of Christ is " spirit and life," living and life-giving. " He that believes" it, " though he were dead, yet shall he live." " Awake, then, ye that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." " Repent, and believe the gospel." " Be transformed by the renewing of your minds." " Repent and be converted, every one of you," and you shall receive the two inestimable gifts, both the immediate and irrevocable remission of sins, and the habitual purifying and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Receive the truth in the love of it, and you shall be saved. Born of the word and of the Spirit, you will learn from experience what it is to purify your hearts, through the truth, by the Spirit. " Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," the exhortation will be addressed to you, and, by the grace of God, not in vain, " to lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, and, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby ;" for then ye shall have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Oh that even now the Lord may give testimony to the word of his grace, and that in the annals of heaven it may

¹ Phil. ii. 16 ; 2 Cor. iv. 2, ii. 17 ; Col. i. 28 ; Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

be recorded, that this man and that man were born, now and here, and that many who entered within these walls "dead in trespasses and sins," may depart "written among the living in Jerusalem."¹

III. MOTIVES ENFORCING THE EXHORTATION.

§ 1. *Motives from the state and character of Christians.*

I come now to the third question : What are the motives by which this exhortation is enforced ? These are presented in two different forms. They are either folded up in the connective particle "wherefore," or lie unfolded in the statement, "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Let us look at them in their order, and open not merely our minds to apprehend their meaning, but our hearts to feel their force.

Let us then inquire, What are the motives to "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings," and to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby," that are folded up in the connective particle "wherefore ?" This word looks backward to the statements in the 22d and 23d verses of the last chapter : "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren," and, "You have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth for ever ;" and forward to the clause, "As new-born babes," which is equivalent to 'being new-born babes.' The meaning of these statements has already been explained. It is their force as motives to the duties here enjoined that we are now to illustrate. The general statement is, "You have lately become the children of God both as to state and

¹ John vi. 63, xi. 25 ; Eph. v. 14 ; Mark i. 15 ; Acts iii. 19 ; 2 Thess. ii. 10 ; Rom. xii. 2 ; Isa. iv. 3.

character, by the belief of the truth, under the influence of the Holy Spirit." The force of this statement as a source of motives will be made plainer by resolving it into its elements: 'You are as new-born babes; you are the children of God; you are brethren as being the children of God, members of the same family; you became so by obedience to the truth; you became so under the influence of the Spirit.' Every one of these propositions, all of them, evidently included in the statements referred to the connective term "wherefore," is instinct with impulsive energy, replete with powerful motives.

(1.) You are little children: lay then aside malignity and craft. These, hateful wherever they appear, are monstrous in an infant. They are quite incongruous with the child-like character that belongs to genuine Christians. Like little children, too, desire growth, and for this purpose desire your appropriate nourishment. It is natural for a child to grow, and to wish to grow. It is unnatural for a child to be stationary, and to have no desire for growth; and so it is with the spiritual babe. The child is born to grow, and has an instinctive desire to grow. A Christian not making progress, not desiring to make progress, is something quite out of the natural course of the spiritual world. And as the mother's milk is the natural, the needful means of nutriment to the infant, so is the pure truth the natural and needful means of progressive holiness to the regenerate soul.

(2.) You are the children of God: you should then be like your Father in heaven, who is infinitely benignant and truthful. If you were malicious, guileful, and envious, would you not falsify your profession of divine sonship? Would you not prove yourselves the children of a very different father, even of him who was "a murderer" and "a liar" "from the beginning?" It is the same argument which the Apostle Paul puts so strongly in his Epistle to

the Philippians, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless as the sons of God, without rebuke;"¹ and which our Lord urges in a still more forcible form in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."² It is the same principle of motive as in these words: "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Be followers of God as dear children."³ And if you are the children of God, you should desire to grow; for it is thus, thus only, you can honour your Father: "Herein is my Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit"⁴—that is, grow, make rapid progress in holy attainment. And you should desire the sincere milk of the word, you should seek to understand and practically to improve divine truth, for it is the revelation of the mind of your Father. "As obedient children," you should seek to know the will of your Father, that ye may do the will of your Father. He is an unnatural, undutiful child, who acts otherwise.

(3.) Then you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and of course form one spiritual brotherhood. This is a new aspect of the statement, full of additional motive to the duties enjoined. There can be no doubt that Christians are not permitted to indulge in "malice, guile, envying, or evil-speaking," in reference to any class of men; but there can be as little, that in the passage before us there is a direct reference to the conduct of Christians to each other, and that those evil tempers and habits are con-

¹ Phil. ii. 15.

² Matt. v. 44-48.

³ Eph. v. 1.

⁴ John xv. 8.

demned as opposed to that pure fervent love of the brethren, which had been enjoined in the close of the preceding chapter. The bearing of this consideration, that they are all brethren, on the *dissuasive* exhortation, is direct and powerful. Brothers should treat one another with an ingenuous openness. If there is to be malice or deceit in the family circle, where is true sincerity to dwell? Love one another. Surely malice, deceit, hypocrisies, envyings, and evil-speakings, are peculiarly out of place among those who have *all* been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible;" who have been bound by ties of a brotherhood that neither time nor eternity can dissolve; and who have "purified their souls, through the truth by the Spirit, to the unfeigned love of the brethren." It is substantially the same motive that is brought forward in these exhortations: "Love as brethren. Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy," which is the same thing as evil-speaking; "lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man, who is corrupt in his deeds; and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for ye are members one of another."¹ Confraternity, in its very nature, and especially such a confraternity, implies an obligation to kindness and sincerity on the part of the members. This motive also strongly urges to compliance with the *persuasive* exhortation; for spiritual growth is not only necessary to individual happiness, but to the prosperity of the body. The same idea that is expressed by Christians being represented as brethren, is still more strikingly expressed by their being represented as mutually connected as members of one body. The growth of every member is necessary to the welfare of the whole body. The more individual growth, the more general prosperity. It is

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 8; Col. iii. 9; Eph. iv. 25.

by every member growing up to him that is the Head, that "the whole body fitly joined maketh increase."¹ It is by becoming wiser, better, and happier myself, that I increase the wisdom, and holiness, and peace, of the body to which I belong.

(4.) Then still further, you became the children of God, and were formed into a spiritual brotherhood, "by obeying the truth." Wherefore, put away all those evil habits, which can be retained only by disobeying, resisting, the influence of the truth. Every evil temper or action is a practical lie; an implied denial of, and opposition to, the truth; and thus is very inconsistent in those who profess to have submitted to "the truth," to have received it into their hearts as the animating, regulating principle of their souls. And as it was by the influence of the truth you were made holy, so it is by the continued, increased influence of the truth, that you are to continue holy, to become more and more holy. Therefore, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

(5.) Finally here, you became the children of God under the influence of the Spirit; therefore you should put off "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and all those other evil tempers and habits; for these are the fruits, not of the Spirit, but of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is in all "goodness," or benignity, "righteousness, and truth." You would "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," if you "put not away from you all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice." "If ye live in the Spirit, ye walk in the Spirit." And therefore, too, should you "desire the sincere milk of the word;" for it is by the word, understood and believed, that the Spirit carries on his sanctifying work. It is presumptu-

¹ Eph. iv. 16.

ous folly to expect to be sanctified or guided by the Spirit, without the word. The Spirit leads to the word; and it is through the word that he enables us to "put off the old man, who is corrupt in his deeds, and put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."¹ Such are the variety and force of appropriate motive which is folded up in the connective particle "wherefore," with which our text commences.

§ 2. *Motives from having tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Let us now examine the motive which is unfolded in the statement with which our text closes. "If so be," or rather, seeing, "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." There can be no doubt that the ordinary usage of the language favours the rendering of our version, "If so be." If it be admitted, the meaning is, If you have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, you are peculiarly bound to "lay aside those evil habits," and to "desire the sincere milk of the word;" and if you do not lay them aside, and desire the sincere milk, then it is a plain proof that, whatever profession you make, you have not "tasted that the Lord is gracious." The particle, however, admits of being rendered "since," taking for granted, not throwing into doubt, their having "tasted that the Lord is gracious." It is the same word that in 2 Thess. i. 6 is rendered, and with obvious propriety, "seeing:" "We glory in you, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure; a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: *seeing* it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us."² This

¹ Eph. v. 9, iv. 30, 31; Gal. v. 25.

² This seems also the force of *scilicet* in Rom. viii. 9. Such a use of

mode of rendering the particle here better accords with the whole strain of the epistle, in which the persons addressed are always spoken of as Christians, and gives greater point and directness to the motives, "Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and "desire the sincere milk of the word, since ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

To bring out the force of the motive, it is necessary to inquire, Who is meant by "the Lord?" What is meant by his being gracious? What is meant by tasting that he is gracious? And then, How the having tasted that the Lord is gracious, affords grounds for the exhortations, "Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and "desire the sincere milk of the word?"

(1.) "The Lord" here is plainly the Lord Jesus. This is evident from what follows; for without doubt He is "the living stone" on whom, as a foundation, Christians, "as living stones, are builded into a holy temple." It is to Him that the passage cited from the prophet Isaiah certainly refers.

(2.) Our Lord Jesus is "gracious," is kind. Benignity, holy love, is his leading moral attribute. His kindness is manifested in what he does, and in what he gives. "The grace" or kindness "of our Lord Jesus" is shown in that, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."¹ He bestows on man, utterly undeserving of anything but punishment, true knowledge, pardon, restoration to the divine favour, peace, holiness, abundant consolation, good hope, eternal life; in one word, happiness, perfection, suited to all the

σῆμα can be supported by classical usage. *Τὸ σῶμα τῶν ἀλλοτρίων, σῆμα σαρρῆς.* "To be struck is painful" to men, "since they are made of flesh, i.e. not of dead matter."—ARISTOT. *Eth. Nic.* iii. 9.

¹ Cor. viii. 9.

capacities of his nature, during the eternity of his being. And that he might do this, He who was in the form of God assumed the nature of man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner; bore our sins, carried our sorrows; "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Herein is love." This is kindness. Verily the Lord is gracious.¹

(3.) To "taste" that the Lord is gracious, is a figurative expression. It seems borrowed from the words of the Psalmist, "O taste and see that God is good,"² where two of the bodily senses are employed to denote clear mental apprehension, along with appropriate mental affection. To taste that the Lord is gracious, is to know that the Lord is gracious; and to know this, not from the report of others, but from your own experience. This knowledge is derived primarily from the faith of the truth as to what the Lord is, and has proved himself to be, by his gifts; and secondarily, from the enjoyment of these gifts of his, on the possession of which we enter by the belief of this truth; and the measure of which enjoyment corresponds to the measure of our faith. He tastes that the Lord is gracious, who believes the love which the Lord has to sinful men; who counts it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," that he came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,—to save sinners, even the chief; and he tastes the graciousness, the kindness of our Lord, who, in the faith of this truth, has peace with God; has access to him; holy love; fervent gratitude; "good hope;" "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the reconciliation."³ Every believer of the truth thus tastes that the Lord is gracious; and he does so just in the measure of his faith. The man

¹ Phil. ii. 6-8.

² Ps. xxxiv. 8.

³ 1 John iv. 16; John i. 16; 1 Tim. i. 15; Rom. v. 1-11.

who does not know Christ to be kind, and his benefits to be precious, is not a believer; and he who does so, cannot but, in the degree in which he is a believer, trust in Christ as his Saviour, and rejoice in the benefits of his salvation. "That is to taste," says Luther, "when I with the heart believe that Christ has been sent for me, and is become mine own; that my miseries are his, and his life mine; when this truth enters into the heart, then it is tasted."¹

It has been supposed by some that the term is intended to intimate not only that they have a true personal knowledge of Christ's kindness, but that that knowledge was as yet but very imperfect. They had tasted, but only *tasted*. They know, but they know but little, of that love that passeth knowledge. No doubt this is a truth; but we should hesitate to say it was in the apostle's mind when he used the words now before us.

(4.) It only remains that I endeavour to bring out the force of the motive to "lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and to "desire the sincere milk of the word," which is afforded by the fact that Christians have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." The love of God in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to himself, known and believed, is the grand source of motive to holy obedience in all its forms. "The grace of God," of which the kindness of the Lord is an expression, "which brings salvation to all," when the divine testimony regarding it is understood and believed, "teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;

¹ *Χρηστίς ὁ Κύριος*. Dulcis est Dominus in contemplatione, ad meditandum, Cant. ii. 3; in aure spirituali ad audiendum, Cant. v. 13; in ore ad loquendum, Pa. cxix. 39; in prospectu ad videndum, Sir. xxiii. 27.—Jo. Hvs.

who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "When the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man (his philanthropy) appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." It is this faithful saying respecting the kindness of the Lord, firmly believed, that makes men "careful to maintain good works." It is "the mercies of God" through Christ, known and believed, that induce men to "present their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God: rational worship;" and to be "not conformed to this present world; but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, so as to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."¹

1. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking." "Sure if you have tasted of that kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits and conform you to him; it will diffuse such a sweetness through your soul, that there will be no place for malice and guile. There will be nothing but love, and meekness, and singleness of heart. They that have bitter malicious spirits evidence that they have not tasted that the Lord is gracious; for they who have done so cannot but, in the degree in which they have done so, 'be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them.'"²

2. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "desire

¹ Tit. ii. 12-14, iii. 4-8; Rom. xii. 1-3.

² Eph. iv. 32. Leighton.

the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." It was in the word that you tasted the Lord was gracious. And is not this a powerful motive to go back to the word, that again, and again, and again, you may "taste and see that God is good;" and thus grow holier and happier, "keeping yourselves in the love of God, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, and looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life?"¹

I cannot conclude the illustration of this point in more appropriate words than in those of the pious Archbishop, a man who always makes it evident that "he spoke what he knew, and testified what he had seen," when he spoke on such themes as these: "This is the sweetness of the word, that it has the Lord's graciousness in it; it gives us the knowledge of his love. This they find who have spiritual life and senses exercised to discern good and evil; and this engages a Christian to a further desire of the word. They are fantastical, delusive tastes, that draw men from the written word, and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the word when we taste it, and therefore there still we are to seek it—to hang upon those breasts which cannot be drawn dry. There, the love of God in Christ springs forth in the several promises. The heart that cleaves to the word of God, and delights in it, cannot but find in it daily new tastes of his goodness. There it reads true love, and by that stirs up its own to him, and so grows and loves every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here—some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy as vessels put into a sea of happiness."

There is a question which here presses for an answer from the conscience of every individual who now hears

¹ Jude 20, 21.

me. Have I tasted that the Lord is gracious? Do I know, experimentally "know, the grace of the Lord Jesus?" You have all often heard of his grace; but have you tasted it? Have you believed his kindness? Have you enjoyed his benefits? The most satisfying evidence of this is, the laying aside all malice and similar tempers, and the desiring the sincere milk of the word. This indeed is the only permanently satisfactory evidence; for there is a dead faith, a presumptuous hope, a false peace. If you really have believed the love of Christ to you, that faith will "work by love" to God, to Christ, to the brethren, to all mankind, and it will "overcome the world." If the hope you cherish is founded on that faith, it will lead you to "purify yourselves as He is pure." If your peace rests on his finished work, it will keep your mind, and fortify it against the assaults of your spiritual enemies.

I trust not a few of this audience have tasted, are tasting, that the Lord is gracious. Let them bless the sovereign grace that made them partakers of this distinguishing blessing, opening their blinded eyes, and restoring soundness to their diseased taste. Let them seek new and more abundant discoveries of the graciousness of the Lord, and let them seek these in his word, and by his word. In his word let them seek discoveries of his kindness; by his word let them seek the enjoyment of his benefits. Let them open their mouths wide, and he will fill them "with the finest of the wheat," "angels' food," "meat which the world knoweth not of,"—"the flesh and blood of the Son of man, who came down from heaven that he might give life to the world, meat indeed, drink indeed." And let them look forward with earnest expectation and humble hope to the manifestation of his grace, to the communication of his benefits, which is to be made "at his appearing

and glory," when they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and shall be made to drink of the river of his pleasures, "with whom is the fountain of life," and "in whose light they shall see light."¹ Thus shall "they know," and ever "follow on to know, the loving-kindness of the Lord."

But what shall I say to those who, I am afraid, form not a small class in the audience,—to those who have never tasted that the Lord is gracious? I might express wonder at their infatuation, blame their pertinacity, pity their folly, and bewail their misery. I might ask, How is it, when the Lord is gracious, so gracious, when the revelation made of his grace is so plain and so well accredited, and when the blessings of his salvation are so suited to your circumstances, and so kindly urged on your acceptance, that you remain experimentally as much strangers to a sense of his kindness, and to the value of his salvation, as if he were not gracious, or as if you did not need, or were excluded from tasting, his grace? But I choose rather to content myself with proclaiming with the Psalmist, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The Lord is good and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, rich in grace, ready to pardon, mighty to save. "Behold HIM, behold HIM." Look, look to Jesus, obeying, suffering, dying, the just in the room of the unjust,—rising, ascending, sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, giving gifts, the gifts of pardon and peace, and holiness and salvation, to men, even to the rebellious, to you,—and then say if the Lord is not gracious. "Herein is LOVE, not that you loved him, but that he loved you;" loved you, so as to "give himself" for you on the cross; loved you, so as to give himself to you in the gospel. And is all this love to be slighted and despised?

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9.

Ah ! if you *will* not taste his *grace*, you *must* feel his *wrath*. "Be wise, be instructed ; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little. Blessed," only blessed, truly blessed, eternally blessed, "are they who trust in him."¹

Thus have we filled up the outline sketched on our entering on the consideration of the subject. Our labour and your time have been lost, worse than lost, if they do not lead to practical results. It is to worse than no purpose that we better understand the meaning, that we more clearly perceive the obligation, of the divine exhortation, if we do not set about complying with it. It increases responsibility and deepens guilt. If henceforth we cherish malignant feeling, and neglect the study of divine truth as the great means of spiritual improvement, we do so at an increased peril. Oh that the divine energy may accompany these statements ; so that, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, all of us may desire the sincere milk of the word, and thus give satisfactory evidence that we have indeed tasted that "the Lord is gracious !" Amen and Amen.

¹ 1 John iv. 10 ; Ps. ii. 10-12.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS, AND HOW THEY OBTAIN THEM.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."—1 PET. II. 4-10.

To unfold the nature and illustrate the value of the numerous "exceeding great and precious" privileges which the peculiar people of God have in present possession, and in certain expectation, is one of the most important, as it is one of the most delightful, duties of the public Christian instructor. Such illustrations are calculated to serve many valuable purposes. They honour the Saviour, from whom all these privileges are derived, by displaying the ardour and tenderness of his love, the efficacy and value of his sacrifice, the prevalence of his intercession, and the munificence of his liberality. They tend to the conversion of sinners, by showing them that it is their obvious interest, as well as their undoubted duty, to yield to the claims of

the Saviour's authority and love ; and they greatly conduce to the consolation and joy of the saints, by fixing their attention on the number, and variety, and value, and security of their distinguishing blessings ; and to their holiness, by calling forth into vigorous, sustained exercise, that gratitude for these unspeakable gifts, which is the most powerful stimulant to Christian obedience. The more accurately the Christian apprehends the intrinsic excellence, the more fully he appreciates the inestimable worth, of his privileges, the more deeply must he feel his obligations to him to whose sovereign love he is indebted for them all ; and the more readily will he embrace every opportunity of manifesting his sense of this kindness, by actively doing, and patiently suffering, his will.

From these remarks it is obvious, on the one hand, that an enlightened preacher of Christian privilege is one of the best friends of practical religion ; and on the other, that the public Christian instructor who confines himself exclusively to what may be termed the moral part of Christianity, neglects the principal means with which that divine system furnishes us, for reclaiming the vicious and improving the pious, for converting the sinner and edifying the saint, for making the bad good, and the good better.

Such plainly were the views of the Apostle Peter, who, in this epistle of which our text forms a part, insists largely on the peculiar privileges of Christians, representing them as at once a perennial, exuberant source of "everlasting consolation and good hope," amid all the trials and afflictions of the present state, and an inexhaustible store of, to a Christian mind, irresistible motive to perseverance and activity in the discharge of all the varied obligations of religious and moral duty. One of those exhibitions of Christian privilege, obviously brought forward as intended and calculated to serve these practical purposes, lies before

us in the interesting and beautiful, though highly figurative and somewhat complicated, paragraph which we have chosen as the subject of this discourse.

At first view, the paragraph may appear, to a considerable degree, disjointed, and on that account obscure; but on a closer inspection we shall find it to be just a beautiful expansion and illustration of the sentiment stated in the words which immediately precede it, and which constitutes one of the apostle's powerful enforcements of the duties, with the affectionate injunction of which this chapter of the epistle commences: "Ye," Christians, "have tasted that the Lord," that is, your Lord Jesus Christ, "is gracious"—kind. You have obtained, you enjoy, important, invaluable, blessings in consequence of your connection with him. What these are, the apostle states in our text.

In consequence of coming to him, they had been brought by him to God, his Father and their Father. From a state of alienation from God, a state necessarily of deep degradation and misery, they had been brought into a state of most intimate relation to God, a state necessarily of the highest honour and the richest felicity. This is the leading idea: but it is brought out by a variety of figures borrowed from the facts of the Jewish economy, peculiarly calculated to be interesting and instructive to those to whom the epistle was originally addressed.

By becoming connected with him, they had become, in one point of view, constituent parts of a great spiritual temple, infinitely more glorious than the temple at Jerusalem, and in another point of view, ministering priests in that temple, possessed of a more dignified office, and engaged in holier services, than Aaron or any of his sons. They had become "the true circumcision," the spiritual Israel, the possessors of those spiritual privileges of which the external

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δον. It is equivalent to *λίθος οὗτος ἐν ἀπει-
εγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας*—just as 1 Cor.
κοινωνία, κ.τ.λ., for *οὐχὶ ὁ ἄρτος ἐν κλώμει*,

of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

The coherence of the passage is now, I trust, quite evident, as well as the bearing of every part of it on the illustration of the general thesis, “Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” In the privileges which you possess, so inestimably valuable and dignifying, you have abundant experimental proof that the Lord is kind.

We are prepared now for entering on a somewhat more particular consideration of this view of the peculiar privileges of Christians, as a manifestation of the Lord’s kindness to them; and I do not know that the whole truth can be brought before our minds more fully and impressively, than by attending in succession—I. To the view which the text gives us of their degraded and unhappy state previously to their obtaining these privileges. II. To the manner in which they obtained them: by coming to Christ as the divinely laid foundation. III. To the dignified and happy state in which, as Christians, they are placed. And IV. To the disgrace and ruin of those who refuse these privileges, by neglecting the only way in which they can be obtained. This will bring before our minds all the truth contained in the passage, and will bring it before our minds as all intended to bear on this one point—the manifestation of the Saviour’s kindness, which his people possess in the distinguishing privileges which he bestows on them.

I. THE DEGRADED AND MISERABLE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS PREVIOUSLY TO THEIR OBTAINING THEIR PECULIAR PRIVILEGES.

Let us first, then, attend to the view which the text gives us of the state of Christians previously to their connection with Christ, as a means of throwing light on the statement,

"Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The degree of kindness manifested in conferring certain privileges is materially affected by the state in which the object of kindness and the subject of privilege was, previously to these privileges being bestowed. The giving of a higher degree of nobility to one already noble, is a very different favour, a very different manifestation of kindness, on the part of a prince, from the giving of the same, or even an inferior degree of honour, to a peasant or a slave. To form a just idea of the graciousness of the Lord towards his peculiar people, we must keep steadily in view the state in which his grace finds them. That state is here presented to our minds, in contrast with the state into which that grace has brought them. It has made them "living stones" who were "dead stones." It has brought them into marvellous light who were in darkness. It has made those the people of God who were not a people, not the people of God. It has bestowed mercy on those who had not obtained mercy. Dead stones; in darkness; not a people; not the people of God; not having obtained mercy;—these are the images under which the inspired writer describes the original state of those who now have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Let us inquire into their meaning.

§ 1. *They were "dead stones."*

They were not lively, or rather living stones; they were "dead stones." The language here is so boldly metaphorical, that, to our cold occidental imaginations, it is apt to appear harsh and unnatural. Yet it is not obscure, and is a very striking expression of a very important truth. The Christian Church is represented under the figure of a temple, an edifice intended to indicate the presence and promote the glory of the Divinity. This is a spiritual, living temple, far more worthy of the spiritual living God than any material

building. Of this living temple, Jesus Christ is the living foundation. That a body of men are fitted for indicating the presence and promoting the honour of the only living and true God, is entirely owing to their relation to Jesus Christ, to their personal interest in the saving efficacy of his mediation ; and all who, through this personal interest in these saving effects, are transformed by the renewing of their minds, are living stones, fit materials for forming part of such a spiritual edifice.

But this is not a natural, it is a supernatural state. The living stones were once "dead stones." That is, they were utterly unfit for forming a part of the living temple, of the true Church of God. They were "without God" in the world, "alienated from the life of God." "They did not like to retain him in their knowledge." "He was not in all their thoughts." God was not in them by his sanctifying Spirit. The language of their hearts was, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Looking at such a man, or at a collection of such men, surveying their habitual character and conduct, the heaven-enlightened observer says, No, this is not the living temple of the living God. This is not "the house of God;" this is not "the gate of heaven." This is "the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit." And as they give no indication of God's presence in them, they are quite unfit for promoting his honour. Such men, such bodies of men, while they continue unchanged, cannot worship or glorify God. They are little disposed usually to engage in acts of worship ; and when they do engage in them, to employ the prophet's phraseology, it is rather "howling" than "praying,"—a dead oblation, not a living sacrifice.¹

Such were some, such were all, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To them all it may be said, though in a

¹ Hos. vii. 17.

different sense from that in which the prophet uses the words, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged;" or, in the words of the apostle, "Remember that ye were in times past in the flesh; without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" utterly unqualified, utterly indisposed, for intercourse and fellowship with God; not knowing God, not wishing to know him; altogether unfit for making him known.¹

§ 2. *They were in "darkness."*

A second view of the original state of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, is, that they "were in darkness." Darkness is an emblem of ignorance, error, depravity, and misery; and in all the extent of significance which belongs to the emblem, the persons here referred to were in darkness. All men by nature are under the influence of ignorance and misapprehension of the true character of God; and this necessarily involves ignorance and misapprehension of every subject which it is of most importance for man to be rightly and thoroughly informed on. "They know not, neither do they understand; they go on in darkness."²

This ignorance and error are naturally connected with moral depravity. As truth and holiness, so ignorance, error, and depravity, go together. Men are "alienated from the life of God, by the ignorance that is in them." Instead of serving the God who is light, they serve the prince of darkness. Their works are "the unfruitful works of darkness."³

And as their state was one of ignorance, error, and sin,

¹ Isa. li. 1; Eph. ii. 11, 12.

² Ps. lxxxii. 5.

³ Eph. iv. 18, v. 11.

it was also one of misery. They were strangers to "the light of life." The light of God's countenance did not shine on them. They were destitute of "his favour, which is life; of his loving-kindness, which is better than life."¹

§ 3. *They were "not the people of God."*

A third view given of the previous state of those who had tasted that the Lord was gracious, is, that "they were not a people," "not the people of God." The former views respect Christians in their previous state individually; this seems rather to refer to them as a body.

They were not "the people of God." They did not belong to the holy society. They were "aliens from the commonwealth of" the spiritual "Israel." They were equally destitute of the character and the privileges of God's peculiar people. Instead of sitting down "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God," they were "without, in outer darkness," lying under the power of the wicked one, the prince of darkness.

They were not, properly speaking, at all "a people;" they were so base and miserable as not to deserve the name of "a people." Men in their natural state are incapable of the highest form of social relation, that of being members of the holy commonwealth, subjects of the heavenly kingdom. They are rather a herd of outlaws, a band of rebels, than a properly organized "people."

§ 4. *They had "not obtained mercy."*

The last view given us of the previous state of Christians is, that they "had not obtained mercy." The meaning of that is not, that they were not the objects of the benevolence or of the saving purpose of God. "The tender

¹ John viii. 12; Ps. xxx. 5, lxiii. 3.

mercy of God is over all his works.”¹ God has a love to *man*,² guilty, depraved, righteously-condemned, self-ruined man; and this love to man appears, not, first, when man, by believing the truth, and being transformed in the renewing of his mind, becomes, in the degree in which he is so, the proper object of the divine moral approbation and complacential delight; but herein God manifested and “commended his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, enemies, Christ died for us;” and as to all who ever taste that the Lord is gracious, there can be no doubt that he “loved them with an everlasting love, *therefore* with loving-kindness does he draw them” to himself. Yes, when God “blesses them with heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ,” it is in accordance with, and in consequence of, his having “chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, having in love predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to Himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, and to the praise of the glory of his grace.”³

The meaning is not, that they were not the objects of divine love, but that they were not the subjects of divine saving benefits. They were the objects equally of his judicial displeasure, and of his moral disapprobation. They were not blessed by him with any heavenly blessing. They were unpardoned, unjustified, unsanctified. They were “poor and miserable, blind and naked.” They were in a state in which, if they had continued, they must have been miserable for ever. For such persons to be made to taste that the Lord was gracious, was mercy indeed, mercy which should have a constraining power to make them most dutiful subjects of their gracious Lord.

¹ Ps. cxlv. 9.

² ἡ φιλανθρωπία. Tit. iii. 4.

³ Rom. v. 8; Eph. i. 3-6.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRISTIANS OBTAIN THEIR
PECULIAR PRIVILEGES: BY FAITH OF THE TRUTH,
AND RELIANCE ON THE SAVIOUR.

Let us now turn our attention, for a little, to the view the text gives us of the manner in which those miserable beings became possessed of their peculiar privileges; to the immediate cause of so favourable a change in their state and circumstances. It was by "coming to Christ as a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;" it was by "believing on him," as "the chief corner-stone, elect, precious, which God had laid in Zion."

To believe on Christ as the chief corner-stone, and to come to him as the living stone, have generally been understood as synonymous expressions, and both have been viewed as significant of that faith which, by the constitution of the new covenant, is necessarily connected with the enjoyment of the blessings of the Christian salvation; and the passage, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst,"¹ has often been quoted as clearly proving this. I apprehend that that passage merely proves, that "he that cometh to Christ," and "he that believeth on him," are two descriptions of the same person, not that they are expressions entirely synonymous in meaning. The following passage seems, indeed, clearly to distinguish between believing on, and coming to, and to represent the latter as the consequence of the former, the former as the means of the latter: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."² To believe, is to count a proposition true on the ground of what appears satisfactory testimony; to believe *on*, or *in* a

¹ John vi. 35.

² Heb. xi. 6.

person, is a Hebraistic mode of expression, and signifies to count a testimony, given either by or respecting that person, to be true. To believe in Christ, is to count true what Christ says, or what is said about Christ; to know and be sure of it, to reckon it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."¹ To come to Christ is a figurative expression, denoting those mental exercises which may be termed the movement of the mind and heart towards Christ, in the various characters in which the divine testimony represents him, and which equally, by the constitution of human nature and of the new covenant, grow out of the faith of the truth respecting him, of which the bodily movement of coming is a natural figurative representation. The peculiar character of the mental movement, depends on the view at the time before the mind respecting Christ. Believing the truth respecting him as the great Prophet, I come to him seeking the knowledge of his will, with a determination to receive any doctrine, every doctrine, which he delivers, just because he delivers it. Believing the truth with respect to him as a Priest, I come to him relying with undivided, unshaken confidence on his atonement and intercession. Believing the truth with respect to him as a King, I come to him in a cheerful, unquestioning obedience to his commands and appointments, just because they are his. This exactly accords with the view given in our excellent Shorter Catechism, which teaches us, not that faith is receiving and resting on Jesus Christ for salvation, but "that faith is that by which we receive and rest on Christ;" and in the Confession of Faith, which teaches us, "that it is by faith that we accept and rest on Christ, yield obedience to the commands, tremble at the threatenings, and embrace the promises, of God."²

¹ *Vide* "Hints on Faith and Hope."

² Westminster Short. Cat. Q. 86. Confession of Faith, Ch. xiv. sec. 2.

It was, then, by believing the truth about Christ, and by those outgoings of the mind and heart to him, that necessarily grow out of this faith, that the Christians to whom Peter wrote obtained, and retained, possession of the high honours and privileges which are here enumerated. It was thus that not shame but honour was their portion; that they became living stones; that they were built up, on him the living foundation, "a spiritual house;" that they became "a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation," "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," a people, the people of God, partakers of distinguishing saving blessings. This is just the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, which meets us everywhere in the Bible,—that it is by the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, that individuals obtain personal possession of the blessings of the Christian salvation.

Let us look a little more closely at this interesting view of the faith of the gospel, and its immediate and necessary effects. Those to whom Peter wrote, had believed on, and come to, the Lord. What they believed, and how they came to him, will appear very plain on examining the passage before us. What they believed was, that Jesus Christ was indeed "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; the chief corner-stone laid by God in Zion, elect, precious;" and that every man thus believing may rest satisfied that he shall not be ashamed by the disappointment of his hopes. And, believing this, they had come to him as the divinely appointed and divinely qualified foundation; they had exercised hope and confidence in him; they had built their creed on him; they had rested their expectations of eternal life on him; they had submitted to him as their only Lord and King.

There is some difficulty in forming a clear, distinct idea of the principal figurative representation here used, in which

Christ is compared to a stone,¹ a living stone, a chief cornerstone, elect, precious. There can be no doubt that the apostle had before his mind the following passages of Scripture: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner; this is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes." "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and taken." And, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."²

It is sufficiently obvious that the general representation is, 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of a spiritual temple, of which believers in him form the superstructure. He is the foundation, they are stones built on the foundation.' Whatever the meaning of this may be, so far the figurative expression is distinct enough; but what are we to make of the epithet "living," applied both to the foundation and the superstructure? He is the "living stone," they are "living stones." It seems impossible satisfactorily to account for our translators having rendered the same word living in the first instance, and lively in the second. Some have supposed that, in these expressions, there is an allusion to the undoubted fact, that the ancients were in the habit of speaking of stone in its native state, lying compact, unbroken in its original place in the earth, as the living rock.³ Jesus Christ, according to this view of the matter, is compared to

¹ "Hærebat animo Petri cognomen ipsi a Domino datum; hinc variè ad id alludit non modo *Lapidis* vocabulo, Acts iv. 11, sed etiam frequentî firmitudinis mentione."—BENGEL.

² Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. viii. 14, xxviii. 16. See Note A. ³ See Note B.

a mighty rock, resting in the place where the omnipotent hand of God placed it, when "by his power he set fast the mountains, being girded with power," affording an immovable foundation, very different from any stone, however large, which the hand of man could lay; and when it is said that believers are built upon him as living stones, the idea intended to be conveyed is the closeness and indissolubleness of their connection with him: they form, as it were, a part of the living rock: so intimately connected are they, that they cannot be disjoined either from the foundation, or from one another.

This is certainly ingenious, but we doubt if it be the apostle's reference. The epithet "living" in reference to the foundation, and the stones built on it, like the epithet "spiritual" in reference to the house or temple, seems to belong not to the figurative representation, but to the exposition of it, just as, in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the epithet "living" is connected with sacrifice; and "reasonable," or rational, with "worship," religious service. The epithets are intended to indicate that the temple spoken of is a temple worthy of him who cannot "dwell in temples made with hands;" a living temple for the living God; a spiritual temple for God, who is a spirit. Its foundation is a living foundation; the stones of which it is composed are living stones. Considering this as the true interpretation of the phraseology, let us now inquire what are the great truths respecting Christ contained in this figurative phraseology, the belief of which is represented as that by which the Christians whom Peter was addressing had obtained possession of their high and distinguishing privileges.

The great principle is, 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of the spiritual temple of God;' this is the central statement. Then, 'this foundation has been laid by God; it is a chief

corner-stone ; it is the elect or chosen ; it is precious ; it was disallowed of men, but by God it is made to serve the purpose for which it was intended ; and this foundation is a living stone ;'—these are the subsidiary statements which cluster round that central one. Let us endeavour to ascertain their meaning ; and, if I mistake not, we shall find that they contain a very full and striking statement of the gospel of our salvation.

Jesus Christ is the foundation, the sole foundation, of the spiritual temple of God.¹ What that temple is, there is no room to doubt. It is true Christians, viewed as connected with Christ, and with each other, through their common connection with him. It is this holy society, viewed as the residence of God, and as the grand means of promoting his glory in the world. These are the purposes of a temple. It is the Deity's house ; and it is the medium by which he is known and honoured among men. Now, keeping this in view, it will not be difficult to see what is meant by Christ's being the foundation of this spiritual temple. It is just this, that it is by connection with him that Christians, either individually or collectively, are fitted to serve the purposes of a temple ; to be a residence for God, and the means of showing forth his glory among mankind. In his original state, man was fitted and designed to be a temple of God ; and the race, had man retained his primeval innocence, would have been, as it were, one magnificent temple, "formed for himself to show forth his praise." This was the pre-eminent glory of man among all terrestrial creatures, that he was "formed for God's self ;" "capable of and full of God ;" sacred in a peculiar way to the Divinity ; his chosen habitation, the mansion and residence of his indwelling glory. But by sin man individually and collectively

¹ "Christus est vera et prima Ecclesie petra ; a quo Petrus, et ceteri fideles fiunt petrae."—CORNELIUS A LAPIDE,

has become unfit for the purpose of a temple. He has brought on himself the divine curse, the necessary effect of which is the withdrawing of the divine gracious presence. He has become unworthy of, in a moral sense unfit for, being the dwelling-place of God.

The consequences of sin in unfitting human nature to be a temple for God, have been so strikingly described by one of the greatest of our divines, that I gladly borrow his language: "What could be expected on all this, but that man should be forsaken of God; that the blessed presence that had been so spitefully slighted, should be withdrawn, to return no more? No more until at least a recompense should be made for the wrong done, and a capacity be recovered for his future converse: namely, till both his honour should be repaired and his temple; until he might again honourably return, and be fitly received. But who could have thought in what way these things should ever be brought to pass? that is, neither could his departure be but expected, nor his return but be above all expectation. To depart was what became him; a thing, as the case was, most godlike or worthy of God, and what he owed to himself. It was meet so great a Majesty, having been so condescendingly gracious, should not be also cheap, or appear inapprehensive of being neglected and set at nought. It became him, as the self-sufficient Being, to let it be seen that he designed not man his temple for want of a house; that having of old inhabited his own eternity, and having now 'the heavens for his throne, the earth his footstool,' he could dwell alone, or where he pleased else, in all his great creation, and did not need, where he was not desired. It was becoming of his pure and glorious holiness not to dwell amidst impurities, or let it be thought that he was a God who took pleasure in wickedness: and most suitable to his equal justice to let them who said to him,

'Depart from us,' feel they spake that word against their own life and soul; and that what was their rash and wilful choice, is their heaviest doom and punishment. It was only strange that when he left his temple he did not consume it; and that, not leaving it without being basely expelled, he had thought of returning without being invited back again."¹

Of this new and more glorious restored temple, formed of human beings, in which Jehovah is to dwell for ever, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of God, is the foundation and chief corner-stone. It required such a foundation. "The indignity offered to the majesty of the Most High God, in his most ignominious expulsion from his own temple, was to be recompensed; and the ruin must be repaired which had befallen the temple itself. In reference to both these performances, it was determined that Immanuel—that is, his own Son, his substantial image, the brightness of his glory, the eternal Word—should become incarnate; and being so, should undertake several parts, and in distinct capacities, and be at once a single temple himself; and that this temple should also be a sacrifice, and thereby give rise to a manifold temple, conformed to that original one, of each whereof, in the virtue of his sacrifice, he was himself to be the glorious pattern, the firm foundation, the magnificent founder, and the most curious architect and framer, by his own various and most peculiar influence."²

It is Jesus Christ who, by his sacrifice, and intercession, and Spirit, and word, and providence, makes individual men fit residences for the Holy Divinity; and it is Jesus Christ also who renders these men, united into a holy society, the effectual means of promoting his glory. It is IN HIM, that

¹ HOWE. The best thoughts in these paragraphs are borrowed from that wonderful book, "The Living Temple."

² Howe.

is, united to him, as the great corner-stone of the foundation, that "all the building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord." It is as united to him, that the individual members of the Church "are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." Or, to vary the figure, "HE is the head, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."¹

This, then, is the great central truth. 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of the spiritual temple.' Through him we are reconciled to God; through him we are conformed to God. It becomes, through his atonement, congruous, that God should dwell in us, as his temple; and, by his Spirit, we are fitted to be the means of proclaiming his name and manifesting his glory to men and to angels; for "by the Church is made known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God."² He is "the author of salvation," THE SAVIOUR.

How different is the religion of the New Testament from the religion of many who profess to believe it! In the religion of many self-called Christians, there is but a very unfrequent and indirect reference to Christ. While they profess to believe all the doctrines of the New Testament relative to his person and mission, and would be shocked to be considered as enemies to his divinity or atonement, they have no deep, abiding views of the importance of these truths to their own hope, holiness, comfort, and salvation. They have no habitual sense of the absolute necessity of his mediation, no habitual trust in his sacrifice, no habitual dependence on his Spirit. Their professed belief of the peculiar principles of the gospel seems to exert no influence

¹ Eph. i. 20-22, iv. 15, 16.

² Eph. iii. 10.

over their religious and moral dispositions and conduct. They think and feel much as they would have done if there never had been such a person as Jesus Christ ; their life is anything but a life "by the faith of the Son of God."¹

The religion taught in the New Testament, of which our text is a fair specimen, is Christianity in the most emphatic and peculiar sense of the term : "Christ is all in all." It is His religion. It is all *by* him ; it is all *about* him ; he is its author, he is its substance ; he is the sun of this system, the soul of this body. Everything is viewed in its connection with him,—every doctrine and every precept, every privilege and every duty, every promise and every threatening. The ground of acceptance is his sacrifice ; the source of light and life, holiness and peace, his Spirit ; the rule of duty, his law ; the pattern for imitation, his example ; the motives to duty, his authority and grace ; the great end of all, his glory, God's glory in him. He is considered as the great reservoir of spiritual blessing, filled by the grace of God, ever full, ever flowing to our needy race. "Of God, Christ is made to men, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Every devout feeling, every religious duty, takes a peculiar flavour and colour from its reference to his mediation. He, he alone, is the foundation : "other foundation can no man lay."² Let us seek that Christ may be in us what he is in our Bibles. Let us see to

¹ "Brother, brother," said John Eliot, 'the apostle of the Indians,' to a minister who came to see him when he was dying, "let there be much of Christ in your ministry, if you would ever win souls. I dread a Christless Christianity."—Quoted by ORTON, in a letter to Clark. "I dread mightily," said the dying Haliburton, "that a rational sort of religion is coming in among us ; I mean by it a religion that consists in a bare attendance on outward duties and ordinances, without 'the power of godliness,' and by these means people shall fall away into a way of serving God which is mere Deism, having no relation to Christ Jesus and the Spirit of God."—*Memoirs*, p. 325, Collins' edition.

² 1 Cor. i. 30, iii. 11.

it that he be not only admitted by us to be *the* foundation, but that he be *our* foundation; and let us every day, every hour, be coming, in the faith of the truth, to him as the divinely appointed foundation. Let us seek to be more and more "grounded on him in love," and let the language of our hearts be that of the dying martyr: "None but Christ, none but Christ."

The truths now stated cast also a steady and pleasing light on a subject of deep interest at all times, of peculiarly deep interest in the times that are passing over us: the true nature of the union of the Church, and the true means of promoting it. It is the union of "living stones," and that is to be promoted by "coming to *the* living stone." No union of dead stones can ever form a "spiritual house." There is no becoming living stones, but by coming to *the* living stone; no coming closely together among the living stones, but by coming individually closer to the living stone; no coming closer to the living stone, without coming closer to one another. No combination of worldly men can form or promote the union of the Church. That union is union in truth and love; and this can have place only among those who "have received out of his fulness," who, according to the benignant good pleasure of the Father, is "full of truth and grace." And it will take place just in proportion to the degree in which these communications are received. Oh, when the Church, the visible assembly of the professed people of God, becomes, as we trust it one day shall, obviously a well-compacted building of living stones, closely cemented to one another, by all being firmly attached to the great living foundation, what a spectacle will the Zion of the Lord, all radiant with divine light, then exhibit! Then will be accomplished the promise which has cheered the heart of her genuine children in the seasons of her desolation: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and

not comforted! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." Then shall the palace of the great King, the Lord of Hosts, the temple of the God of heaven and earth, be "established on the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." And should the kings of the earth, as they have often done, assemble against it, "they shall pass by together; they shall see it, and marvel; they shall be troubled, and pass away." And a great voice shall be heard in heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God"—the spiritual house, formed of the living stones on the living foundation; all shining with living light and holy beauty—"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Who that has any part in the faith and feeling of a Christian, can help saying in his heart, "Hasten it, O Lord, in its time. How long, O Lord, how long?" "He that testifieth these things saith, and he is faithful who has promised, Behold, I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."¹

I proceed now to call your attention shortly to the subsidiary statements, which all, as it were, cluster around this great central one, which is indeed the sum and substance of "the gospel of our salvation."

The first of these is, 'Jesus Christ, as the foundation of

¹ Isa. liv. 11-14, lx. 13; Micah iv. 1; Rev. xxi. 3, xxii. 20.

the spiritual temple, is "laid by God." "Behold," saith Jehovah by the prophet, "I lay in Zion a sure foundation." The phrase "in Zion" seems intended to mark that the foundation was the foundation of a temple, a palace for himself. "Mount Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole land," was "the mountain of God's holiness," the mountain set apart for himself. "He chose the Mount Zion, which he loved." While "he was known in Judah, and his name was great in Israel, in Salem was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion."¹ To lay a foundation, then, "in Zion," is to lay the foundation of a temple, and of a temple to Jehovah.

We have already seen what is signified by Jesus Christ being this foundation. Our inquiry now is, What is meant by this foundation being laid by Jehovah? It indicates that the whole arrangement is not the result of human, of created wisdom or power, but of divine. No man, no angel, laid this foundation. "I lay it," says Jehovah. It is equivalent to—"I appoint him to the character emblemized by the foundation of the spiritual temple. I invest him with it. I qualify him for it. I accredit him in it." Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed, the divinely qualified, the divinely raised up, the divinely accredited Saviour of men; "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;" at the appointed period "sent forth;" possessed of every necessary qualification, and bringing along with him every necessary credential; and "all" these "things are of God." His destination, his constitution, his qualifications, his attestation, are all divine. There seems to be a peculiar reference to the manifestation of this glorious truth, when "God raised Jesus from the dead, and set him at his own right hand." Then was "the stone set at nought of the builders" made to appear to be indeed "the head stone," the princi-

¹ Ps. xlviii. 1, 2, lxxviii. 68, lxxvi. 1, 2.

pal stone "of the corner." Then was it proclaimed as from heaven, "Let all the house of Israel," let all the family of man, "know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom men crucified, both Lord and Christ."¹

The second subsidiary statement is, 'This foundation is "a chief," or the chief "corner-stone."' The stone on which the angle of a building rests, gives not only support, but connection, to the different parts of the building. It joins the different walls and stones into one building. The idea intended to be conveyed seems to be this, that the union of Christians as a body fitted for enjoying the divine presence and promoting the divine honour, depends on their individually being connected with Jesus Christ, as the divinely appointed, qualified, constituted, accredited Saviour. It is this common connection with him which is the basis of their connection with each other. "In him," united to him, "they are builded together, a habitation of God through the Spirit," a spiritual habitation of God. It is thus that they are "knit together," thus that they are "fitly joined and compacted."

The third subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is "chosen or elect." These words seem intended as a translation of the Hebrew phrase rendered in our version of the Old Testament a "tried stone," proved and approved, and therefore chosen, selected, appointed, and employed to serve an important purpose. When God from eternity appointed his Son to be the Saviour of men, the foundation of the spiritual temple, the Father knew the Son: he knew his capacities, he knew he could bear all that was to be laid on him,—both the weight of suffering and "the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory;" and previously to his actually constituting him "Lord and Christ," and holding him forth to men in these characters, he had been exposed

¹ 1 Pet. i. 20; Gal. iv. 4; Ps. cxviii. 22; Acts iv. 10-12, ii. 36.

to every species of trial competent to him, and had stood the trial. Every test applied but brought out more fully his complete fitness for the mighty work to which he was appointed.

The fourth subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is "precious," that is, highly valuable, as possessed of every quality necessary in a foundation, and as alone being possessed of the qualities necessary in the foundation of such a building; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, Christ Jesus." The idea is, Jesus Christ is a "precious," an all-accomplished Saviour, a perfect Redeemer, having all the knowledge, all the wisdom, all the power, all the merit, all the compassion arising from himself having "suffered, being tried," which are necessary to fit him for accomplishing the work of salvation in the best possible way. And he is "precious," too, as the only Saviour. He is not one among many saviours, not the best among them; he is the only Saviour. He can, and he only can, save from evils; he can, and he only can, raise to blessings; deliverance from the first, and possession of the second of which, are absolutely necessary and completely sufficient to secure us from being miserable, and for making us happy, without measure and without end, up to the largest capacity of our nature for suffering or enjoyment, and during the whole eternity of our being. "The Deity, filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection, made him infinitely precious and excellent; and not only was he thus excellent in himself, but he is of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others, of such a virtue that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones; but it is certain that this precious stone hath not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead. Dead bodies he raised in the days of his abode on

earth, and dead souls he doth still raise by the power of his word.”¹

The fifth subsidiary statement is, ‘ This foundation-stone was “disallowed and rejected of men;” but, notwithstanding, made by God to answer all the purposes for which it was intended.’ The direct reference is to the rejection by the Jewish nation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour promised to the fathers. When the Word, made flesh of the seed of David according to the promise, “came to his own, his own received him not.”² Instead of honouring him as the sent of God, the divinely destined, qualified, accredited Saviour, they regarded him with contempt and abhorrence as a low-born impostor, and put him to the death of a blasphemer and a traitor. But while this is the direct reference, the statement is meant to embrace a wider range of facts. The Jews were just a specimen of our race, and acted as the race would have done in similar circumstances; and men generally, universally till they are taught of God, disallow and reject Jesus Christ as the foundation; and though they do not do this exactly in the same way as the Jews did, for this is impossible, they manifest the same spirit, they do substantially the same thing. Jesus Christ, made known in the word of the truth of the gospel as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, is by the great body of mankind not acknowledged. They do not own his authority, trust in his atonement, imbibe his spirit, obey his laws. But though men reject him, God owns him: he shows that in his estimation he is proved, approved, excellent, invaluable. The stone which the Jewish “builders rejected,” he made “the chief stone of the corner.” He raised him to his own right hand, and gave him all the authority and power, as Mediator, which were necessary to carry forward to accomplishment the benignant purposes of those severe trials by which

¹ Leighton.

² John i. 11.

his excellence had been so fully proved. And still, though mankind very generally reject the Saviour, and so, refusing to build on him the only foundation, perish, yet this foundation of God standeth sure. "Jesus Christ" remains "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and while he is to multitudes, to all who reject him, "a stumbling-block" and "foolishness," by divine power and grace he is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation, to all who believe;" "made of God to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."¹ Men may stumble at the foundation so as to fall, but they cannot move it, or render it in any degree unfit for the great purpose for which it is laid,—to be the sure support of that edifice of mercy and holiness, of which Jehovah has said, "It shall be built for ever."

The last subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is a "living stone." The general meaning of this, at first sight paradoxical declaration, is abundantly obvious. He is a suitable foundation for a spiritual temple, formed not of dead matter, but of intelligent beings. But while this is its meaning, this does not exhaust its meaning. The epithet "living" is, I apprehend, intended to express those qualities in Christ Jesus which make him a fit foundation of a spiritual temple. He is so a "living stone," as that dead stones, when laid on him, become living stones. He has in himself, and has the capacity of communicating to others, all that is necessary to make them fit recipients of the divine presence, fit instruments for promoting the divine glory. He is the living and life-giving foundation. He is full of spiritual life, grace, and truth; and so full, that no man can be brought near him, but straightway he fills him with grace and truth too. It is well said by an old interpreter, "He is called the living stone, as he is called the

¹ Heb. xiii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, 30.

living bread and the living water, not only because he has life in himself, but also because he gives life to the dead. He lives, and because he lives, they who eat him as the living bread, they who drink him as the living water, they who come to him and build on him as the living stone, live also." In the words of the good Archbishop, "He is here called a living stone, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being a lamb that was slain, and is alive for ever and ever, but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life to us,"—a living foundation that transfuses its life into the whole building, and every stone of it, "in whom," united to whom, "all the building is fitly framed." It is the spirit that flows from him which enlivens it, and knits it together, not as a dead mass, but as a "living body." This foundation, from the peculiarity of the case, does for its living superstructure what the root does in the vegetable world to the trunk, the branches, and the leaves, and what the head or the heart in the animal body does to all the members.

Such, then, is the truth about Christ, which the converted strangers scattered abroad believed, that Jesus Christ, though rejected by the great body of mankind, is the divinely chosen, the divinely qualified, the divinely proved, the divinely approved, the divinely constituted, the divinely accredited, Saviour of man,—possessed of every necessary excellence for making man truly and eternally happy, by making him the fit recipient of the divine presence and benefits, and the fit instrument for declaring the divine excellence—showing forth the divine praise. This they believed, for they had heard it "in the word of the truth of the gospel,"—a word to which "God bore witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," and which was confirmed by the testimony of the law and the prophets. And believing

this, they had come to him as the sure foundation laid by God, and had built themselves on him. Believing the truth about him, they had acted towards him according to their faith, implicitly submitting to his teaching as their great Prophet, relying on his atonement as their only Priest, obeying his commandments as their Sovereign Lord and King. This is the way in which they ceased to be dead stones, and became living stones; came out of darkness into light; and from not being a people, became God's people; and from not having found mercy, became the happy possessors of the peculiar favour of Jehovah, and of all its glorious results.

There is a peculiarity in the phraseology which deserves attention before we close our remarks on this part of the subject. The word is in the present, not in the past tense. It is not "having come," but "coming;" not "he who has believed," but "he that believeth." This intimates, that to the continued enjoyment of the peculiar privileges of Christians, there must be continued faith in him, continued coming to him. In order to a life of Christian enjoyment, there must be "a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us."¹

III. THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS.

§ 1. *General Statement.*

It is now time that we proceed to consider the view which the text gives us of the dignified and happy state into which Christians are brought by their believing on, and coming to, Christ. That state is a state of nearness to God, of reconciliation to him, of resemblance to him, of fellowship with him,—a state of dignity and happiness, just because it is a state of nearness to the infinitely great

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

and glorious and ever-blessed God,—a state which strongly contrasts with their previous condition, which was one of distance from God, a state of enmity and alienation; and which, just because it was a state of distance from the source and sum of true glory and happiness, was a state of degradation and misery.

Their happy state, as well as the means by which they reach it, is stated generally in the words, "To you then who believe there is honour;"¹ for this is the literal and natural rendering of the words in the beginning of the seventh verse, which in our version runs thus: "Unto you who believe he is precious." He that believeth on the foundation laid in Zion by Jehovah, that is, as we have shown, he who believes the truth respecting Jesus Christ as the divinely laid foundation, shall not be ashamed or confounded. The faith of the truth naturally, necessarily, gives origin to hope or expectation of certain blessings; and this hope, founded on this faith, "maketh not ashamed," does not disappoint. He who cherishes it shall certainly obtain the blessings he expects; and he shall as certainly find in these blessings that satisfying portion of the heart which he had anticipated. Not shame, but honour, shall be to him. The privileges which, as a believer in Christ, a comer to Christ, a builder on Christ, he enjoys, are of the most dignifying nature. He is brought into a near and most honourable relation to the greatest and best being in the universe. Coming to Christ, he comes to God through him. He becomes "an heir of God," by becoming "a joint heir with Christ Jesus." The general state-

¹ Ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμὴ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. "Cedit honori et commodo vestro, quod in Christo creditis."—GERHARD. "Vobis, igitur honos, credentibus, ille nimirum honos ut non confundamini ab eo in adventu ejus, sed sicut ipse ait, si quis mihi ministraverit, honorificabit eum pater meus." John xii. 26.—BEDA.

ment is expanded in a great variety of expressions, some of them highly figurative, but all of them full of meaning, rich in instruction and consolation. Christians become living stones; they are built up a spiritual house; they are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; they are a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; a holy nation; a peculiar people, that they might show forth the praises of him who called them from darkness to light; the people of God, objects of his peculiar complacency, the subjects of his saving blessings. Let us very shortly inquire into the import of these descriptions of the Christian's peculiar privileges.

§ 2. *Particular Statement.*

(1.) *Christians are "living stones," built up into a temple.*

First of all, they are described as becoming "living stones," by coming to Christ as the living stone. We have already seen they were "dead stones," entirely unfit for forming a part of a spiritual temple. But having believed in and come to "the living stone," they become "living stones."¹ From that connection with Christ, which is necessarily implied in believing the truth respecting him, a change, both of state and character, takes place, which makes it becoming in Jehovah to employ them as materials in the erection of his spiritual temple, and which fits them for answering the great end of a temple, in doing honour to the Divinity who dwells in it. Naturally "far off," they are "brought nigh by the blood of Christ," which is sprinkled on them in the faith of the truth. Alienated from God, they are "reconciled in Christ."

¹ Multa nomina, quæ Christo competunt in singulari, christianis tribuuntur in plurali. Christus lapis, christiani lapides; lapis vivus, lapides vivi. Ex illo, hi quoque sunt filii, sacerdotes, reges, agni.—BENGEI.

Clothed with his righteousness, they are objects of complacent regard to the Holy and Just One; and animated by his Spirit, they are "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which he has made them accepted in the beloved." Quickened by their connection with him who, "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is a quickening Spirit," they are made fit for serving the living God; fit for yielding spiritual, true worship to Him who is a Spirit, and who must be worshipped "in spirit and in truth."

But they not only become living stones, but as living stones they are "built up a spiritual house."¹ They are not only honoured and happy as individuals, but they are formed into a holy, honourable, blessed fellowship. In consequence of their common connection with Christ, they have a mutual connection with each other, and form a living spiritual temple, blessed with the presence, devoted to the worship and honour, of Jehovah, the fountain of life, the Father of spirits. They become members of the most honourable of all societies; the "family in heaven, and on earth, called by the one name," "the name above every name." They are enrolled among the brethren, to whom the perfected Redeemer declares his Father's name. They are members of the Church, "in the midst of which he celebrates his praise." It is the same idea, though under a different image, which the apostle so beautifully expresses in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and the church of the first-

¹ Secundum sapientiores Judæos Messias non debet templum tertium materiale ædificare sed בית רוחנית domum spirituales, cum secundum illos sub Messia omnia debeant esse spiritualia. Ad istam sententiam videtur alludere Petrus Apostolus, qui epistola sua, Cap. ii. 5, dicit nos esse lapides *ἡμψύχους* et *ζῶντας* et *πνευματικὸν ὄλον*.—LE MOYNE, Not. et Obs. ad Barnab. Epist. Varia Sacra, vol. ii. p. 914.

born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."¹

(2.) *Christians are "a holy priesthood."*

In the next branch of the inspired account of the Christians' privileges the figure varies; and they who were represented under the figure of a spiritual temple are represented under the figure of "a holy priesthood," set apart "to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Under the New Testament economy there is but one priest, in the strict meaning of that word as defined by the Apostle Paul: "One taken from among men, ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."² Our great High Priest, of whom all the priests under the Mosaic dispensation were but figures, is "the one Mediator between God and man."³ He presents the only effectual atoning sacrifice. He, on the ground of that sacrifice, makes intercession for those who come to God through him, and obtains acceptance both for them and their services, and authoritatively blesses his people. Whoever professes to be a priest under the new economy invades the prerogative of Him who is "a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek," and is guilty of presumption, as far exceeding that of Korah and his company, as the ministry which Jesus hath received is "a more excellent ministry" than that of Aaron or any of his sons.⁴

¹ Heb. xii. 22-24.

² Heb. v. 1.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

⁴ "The name priest is nowhere in Scripture attributed peculiarly and distinctly to the ministers of the gospel, as such: that which puts a difference between them and the rest of the people of God's holiness seems

It is common, however, in the New Testament, to represent all Christians as figurative priests, in the sense of persons solemnly consecrated to, and habitually engaged in, the divine service.¹ These two views are given us in the passage before us. You are "a holy priesthood," and you are a priesthood engaged in presenting to God "spiritual sacrifices, which are acceptable to God by Christ Jesus." You belong to a higher and holier fellowship than that of the Aaronical priesthood.²

Christians are a "holy," a consecrated priesthood. You are aware that the priests under the Old Testament were separated from among their brethren. They were so by their birth, and by their consecration. As sons of Aaron, they belonged to the priestly order. In like manner, all Christians, by their being born again, are set apart to the service of God. And as Aaron's sons were consecrated by the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water, so Christians have their conscience sprinkled by the blood of Him

to be a more direct participation of Christ's prophetic, not sacerdotal, office. When Christ ascended up on high, he gave some to be *prophets*, Eph. iv. 11 ; none, as we find, to be *priests*. Priests are a sort of church officers whom Christ never appointed."—OWEN. *Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus.*—TERTULLIAN, *de exhortatione Castitatis*, cap. vii.

¹ Est autem illud non temere factum, ut Spiritus Sanctus nunquam in N. Testamento sacerdotis vel sacerdotii nomen ad evangelii ministros accommodarit.—BEZA.

² "When the apostles applied the Old Testament idea of priesthood to Christianity, this was done invariably for the simple purpose of showing that no such visible particular priesthood could find place in the new community ; that, since free access to God and to heaven had been once for all opened to believers by one High Priest, even Christ, they had, by virtue of their union to him, become themselves a spiritual priesthood consecrated to God ; their calling being none other than to dedicate their entire life to God as a thank-offering for the grace of redemption, to publish abroad the power and grace of him who had called them out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvellous light, to make their life one continual priesthood, one spiritual worship, springing from faith, working by love, one continuous testimony for their Saviour."—NEANDER.

“who by the eternal Spirit offered himself a sacrifice to God without spot,” and are purified “by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”¹

As they resemble the priests in their consecration, so they resemble them also in their work. They “offer up spiritual sacrifices.” The sacrifices they present are not expiatory, but eucharistic sacrifices.² The only effectual expiatory sacrifice ever offered was that offered on Calvary; and that so completely answered its purpose, that it put an end to all such oblations. It “perfected for ever all those who were sanctified;” secured complete reconciliation,—full, free, everlasting pardon,—eternal redemption,—salvation with eternal glory; so that there was no more room for sacrifices for sin. No; it is an undoubted truth, one equally delightful to those who trust in, and dreadful to those who reject, this atoning oblation: “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.”³ The eucharistic sacrifices presented by “the spiritual priesthood” are not material, but spiritual, not literal, but figurative sacrifices. The leading idea is, that Christians are brought into a very near relation to God, and that the whole of their lives should be devoted to his spiritual service.⁴ They are to “offer the sacrifice of praise to

¹ Heb. ix. 14; Tit. iii. 5.

² “The sacrifices we are enjoined to offer give ground to the appellation Priests. Now they are of divers sorts, though all in general eucharistical, as—First, of prayers and thanksgivings, Ps. cxvi. 17, cxli. 2; Heb. xiii. 14. Secondly, of good works, Heb. xiii. 14. Thirdly, *abreolucia*, crucifying the old man, killing sin, and offering up ourselves, souls and bodies, an acceptable sacrifice to God, Rom. xii. 1. Fourthly, the sweet incense of martyrdom, Phil. ii. 17.”—OWEN.

³ Heb. x. 26.

⁴ Inter hostias spirituales primum locum obtinet generalis NOSTRI oblatio de qua Paulus.—Rom. xii. 1. Neque enim offerre quicquam possumus Deo, donec illi nos ipsos in sacrificium obtulerimus: quod fit nostri abnegatione. Sequuntur postea preces et gratiarum actiones, eleemosynae et omnia pietatis exercitia. —CALVIN.

God continually, that is, the fruit of the lips," "the calves of the lips," as Hosea has it—not literal calves—"giving thanks to his name." "To do good and communicate they are not to forget, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." They are to "present their bodies"—themselves, embodied living beings, not the dead bodies of slain beasts—"a living sacrifice." "Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they are to do all to the glory of God;" and "whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."¹

External services are spiritual sacrifices only when they embody a right state of mind and heart,—an enlightened mind, a pure devout heart. It is the gift of the heart which makes all other gifts easy to ourselves, acceptable to our God. "My son," says God, "give me thine heart;" and what follows? "Let thine eyes observe my ways."² "This makes the eyes and ears, and tongue and hands, to be holy as God's peculiar property; and being once given and consecrated to Him, it is sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use."³

Such services of the spiritual priesthood, so reasonable, so dignifying, are said to be "acceptable to God by Christ Jesus."⁴ These services are in themselves very undeserving of acceptance; for in the best of them, while we are here below, there is much wanting, and something wrong. But if they are the sincere expression of trust in God's mercy, love to his law, zeal for his glory, with all their imperfections, they are acceptable. Like a kind father, he

¹ Heb. xiii. 15, 16; Hos. xiv. 2; Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.

² Prov. xxiii. 26. תרצנה, rendered by Symmachus *διλησάμενος*.

³ Leighton.

⁴ Isa. lvi. 7. *Αἱ θυσίαι αὐτῶν ἵστανται δικταὶ ἐν τῷ θυσιαστήρίῳ μου.* LXX.

loves to hear even the lisping accents of affectionate confidence from his child; and a very trifle, presented as a token of loyal submission, is in his eyes of great value. Even under the law, he who had not a lamb was welcome with his pigeon; and under the better economy, none need forbear sacrifices for poverty. What God desires is the heart, and there is none so poor but he has a heart to give him. Alas! that so many should want the heart to give the heart they have to give. It is not, however, so much the meanness of the gift offered, as the guiltiness of the offerer, that fills us with anxiety as to the acceptance of our services. Our foul hands pollute the best sacrifices; but where the sacrifice has not the character of insincerity,—a character which will certainly secure rejection, for “if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us,”—notwithstanding all their faults, the services of the Christian are acceptable, “acceptable by, or through, Jesus Christ.” The spiritual priest is clothed with the robe of the Redeemer’s righteousness, and in his clothing we are like Jacob in his brother’s garments: there is “the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” If we offer our sacrifices by him, if we put them into his hands to offer to the Father, we need not doubt that they will be accepted for his sake.

The phrase, “by Christ Jesus,” may be considered as qualifying both the phrase “to offer,” and the expression “acceptable.” We ought not to offer anything but by him, trusting in his mediation, depending on his Spirit; and in doing so we are sure to be accepted, for he is God’s beloved Son, in whom his soul is delighted,—not only delighted and pleased with himself, but in him, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him. “This alone answers all our doubts; for we ourselves, for as little as we see in that way, may yet see so much in our

best services, so many wanderings, so much deadness to prayer, as would make us still doubtful of acceptance, and might say with Job, 'Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to me,' were it not this, that our prayers and our sacrifices pass through Christ's hands. He is that angel that hath much sweet odour to mingle with the prayers of the saints. He purifies them with his own merits and intercessions, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. Oh, how ought our hearts to be knit to him, by whom we are brought into favour with God, and kept in favour with him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted ! In him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory."¹

(3.) *Christians are a "chosen generation."*

Let us now look at the next representation of the Christians' privileges. They are "a chosen generation." This, like the other appellations here given to Christians, is borrowed from the descriptive names given to the Israelitish people under a former dispensation. They are spoken of as "a generation," a race or family, the descendants of one father, standing to each other in the relation of brethren.

Sometimes they are represented as the race or family of Abraham and of Israel. "Seek the Lord, and his strength," says the Psalmist: "seek him for evermore. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; O ye, the seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Israel his chosen." And they are very frequently termed the house or family of Israel.

At other times they are represented as the family or

¹ Leighton.

children of God. "Ye are the children of the Lord your God," says Moses. "Israel," says Jehovah, by Moses, to Pharaoh, "is my son, my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me." "Out of Egypt," says he by the prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."¹

And as the Israelites are often spoken of as a race or generation, the family of Abraham, the family of God, so they are spoken of as "a chosen generation," a selected family. "The Lord," says Moses, "loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them. The heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord thy God's, the earth also, and all that is therein; only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is at this day." "I give waters in the wilderness," says Jehovah, "and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen."²

Now this descriptive appellation, a chosen generation, originally given to the people of Israel, belongs to the people of God, under the new economy, in a far higher sense, with a much greater depth of meaning. "They that are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Though originally "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," they have been brought near, and, having believed, "they are blessed with believing Abraham." They all are, like him, justified freely by God's grace. They all, like him, have Jehovah for their God, according to the promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." They all, like him, have "the inheritance of the world" secured to them; a holier, happier, securer possession than Canaan, is their common property,—"the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for them, and to which they are kept by the power of God,

¹ Ps. cv. 4-6; Deut. xiv. 1; Ex. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1.

² Deut. iv. 37, vii. 6, x. 15; Isa. xliii. 20.

through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”¹

But the appellation “generation,” or race, leads us to think of them, not only as the spiritual family of Abraham, but as the spiritual family of God. They are “all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” They are the family of God in a far higher sense than ancient Israel: “For to as many as receive Christ, to them gives he the privilege² of being the sons of God; and they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “They are born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth for ever.” “Of his own will begat he them by the word of truth, that they might be a kind of first-fruits among his creatures.” They are brought into the relation, formed to the character, of “sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.” “To them pertains the adoption,” in a far more exalted sense than it ever belonged to Israel after the flesh: “God hath sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them who were under the law, that we,” all believers, “might receive the adoption of sons;” and because they are sons, he sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, the spirit, not of bondage, but of adoption, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father. And “since they are now sons, they are heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.” What the crowning dignity and happiness included in this sonship is, we cannot tell, we cannot adequately conceive. Well might the apostle say of this race, this generation, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!

¹ Gal. iii. 29, 9; Eph. ii. 12, 13; 1 Cor. iii. 23; Rom. iv. 13; 1 Pet. i. 4, 6.

² *ἔξουσία*.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."¹

This view of the state of Christians as a race brings before our minds two ideas,—disconnection from the rest of mankind, and intimate union among themselves. Israel, as a people, "dwelt alone, and was not numbered with the nations." Christians "come out from the world, and are separate." They are in the world, not of it. They have "saved themselves from the untoward generation,"² who are of their father the devil, and do his works.

Israel was not only a separate body from the rest of mankind, but a brotherhood. "Moses, when he would have set at one two Israelites who strove, said, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" Christians have one Father, one Elder Brother; they have a common faith and hope, common interests and enemies, common duties and dangers, common joys and sorrows, one mind, one heart, one inheritance. These are the leading ideas suggested by Christians being called a race, a generation, or family.³

But they are not only addressed as a generation, but as "a chosen generation." The choice here referred to may either be their eternal sovereign election of God, to the enjoyment of eternal life through the mediation of Jesus Christ, or, what is the result and manifestation of this, their actual selection from the body of mankind, in what we are accustomed to denominate effectual calling. In both respects they are a chosen generation. There is an

¹ Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12, 13; 1 Pet. i. 23; James i. 18; 2 Cor. vi. 18; Gal. iv. 4-7; Rom. viii. 17; 1 John iii. 1, 2.

² Num. xxiii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 17; Acts ii. 40.

³ Acts vii. 26; John xx. 17; Heb. ii. 11.

important difference between the sense in which Israel after the flesh, and the spiritual Israel, have the appellation "chosen generation" given to them, which deserves to be noticed. Israel, as a race or family, was selected from other races and families. It was the race, not the individuals, that was the direct object of choice. In the case of the spiritual Israel, the individuals are elected; and it is the aggregate of the elected individuals that forms "the chosen generation."

With regard to the former kind of election, the Apostle Paul tells us that "God hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world," that he "predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."¹ With regard to the latter kind of election, David speaks of them as "set apart by God for himself;" our Saviour says, "I have chosen you out of the world;" James represents Christians as "a people for his name taken out by God from among the Gentiles;" and our apostle describes them as "elected," or rather selected, "according to the foreknowledge, the pre-ordination of God, by a spiritual consecration, to obedience, the obedience of the truth, the faith of the gospel, and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," the enjoyment of the saving effects of the shedding of his blood in expiating sin, opening up a channel for the Spirit, and securing all the blessings of eternal life, "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory."²

It seems to be the latter of these elections, which is the fruit of the former, to which here, as well as in the passage just quoted, the apostle refers; for, as Leighton justly remarks, "this descriptive appellation, like the others along with which it stands, is plainly designed to describe their present state as different from what it had been," whereas

¹ Eph i. 4-6.

² Ps. iv. 3; John xv. 19; Acts xv. 14; 1 Pet. i. 2.

their personal election was, like him who made it, strictly eternal and unchangeable. No change had taken place, could take place, with regard to it.

The privilege involved in being thus a chosen generation is one of inestimable value; and being enjoyed by Christians entirely in consequence of their connection with Christ Jesus, the possession of it is a striking personal demonstration to every one of them of the grace of the Lord. In the enjoyment of this privilege they "have tasted that the Lord is gracious." This will appear, if we attend for a moment to the state of those from among whom they were selected, to the purposes for which they were selected, to him who has selected them, and to the cause in which the selection of them originated.

The original state of this chosen generation was not better than that of other men. It was a state of ignorance and error, and guilt and depravity, of degradation and wretchedness, of condemnation and death. To use the expressive language of the apostle: They were "dead in trespasses and in sins; wherein in time past they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom they had their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others: without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God and without hope in the world."¹ What a blessing to be selected from among these victims of error, these slaves of corruption, these heirs of destruction!

And then how does our sense of the value of the blessing rise, when we think of the purpose for which they have

¹ Eph. ii. 1-3, 11, 12.

been selected, selected to be "heirs of God, and joint heirs" with his only-begotten Son; to be justified, sanctified, glorified, conformed both in holiness and happiness to the image of God's own Son; to be blessed with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; to possess "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven, while they are kept for it by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;" to be the means of manifesting to the whole intelligent universe of God, how holy, how happy, the omnipotent, all-wise, infinitely holy, infinitely benignant Jehovah can make those who are the objects of his peculiar love!

For, to judge aright of the value of this privilege, we must never forget that it is GOD who makes both the election and the selection. The value of choice depends on the qualities of the chooser. It is a disgrace, not an honour, an evil, not a benefit, to be the object of the choice of the unprincipled and foolish. The value of being the object of the choice of an individual is in proportion to his intellect and moral worth, his wise benignity, and his power to gratify it. What is the value, then, of election by the all-perfect One? There is prodigious emphasis on the word God, in these two sayings of the apostle: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God;" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"¹ Whom he chooses, he chooses for ever. "He rests in his love." His "purpose, according to election, must stand; and the gifts and the callings" which originate in it "are without repentance."²

But to raise still higher, if possible, our ideas of the value of this choice or selection, as a proof of the grace of the

¹ Rom. viii. 17, 29, 30; 1 Thess. i. 4; Rom. viii. 33.

² Zeph. iii. 17; Rom. ix. 11, xi. 29.

Lord, let us think once more on the cause in which it originates. It has no cause in the selected ones; the cause is in the selector himself, and that cause is, can be, nothing but grace, sovereign kindness.

The cause of God's selection of ancient Israel was not in them, but in him. "The Lord did not set his love on you," says Moses, "nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." What is said of their entrance into Canaan, is equally true of their election: "Speak not in thy heart, For my righteousness the Lord hath chosen me; for the wickedness of these nations the Lord hath rejected them, and driven them out. But not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, art thou chosen and brought in, but that the Lord may perform the word which he spake unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people."¹

In like manner, the election of those who form the chosen generation under the new economy, is not owing to any previous good quality in them. They are not selected for their worldly wisdom, power, or dignity: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised,

¹ Deut. vii. 7, ix. 4-6.

hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence. But that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise ? where is the scribe ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?”¹

They are not selected for their previous moral worth : “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God ; yet such were some of you,”—now the “sanctified of Christ Jesus, called to be saints.” And even in the case of those who were not remarkable for depravity and guilt, the cause of their being selected cannot be found in their moral worth. In man, in every man born merely of the flesh, “dwelleth no good thing.” The only account that can be given, why any of the human family are selected, and why one rather than another is selected, is, “Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” “He has mercy because he wills to have mercy ; he has compassion because he wills to have compassion.”² The cause of his own selection appears to every one of the chosen generation “a mystery hid in God ;” and when he thinks of it, his heart overflows equally with gratitude and amazement : “What am I, and what is the house of my father, that I should be brought hitherto ? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God ?”

“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room ;

¹ 1 Cor. i. 26-31, 19.

² 1 Cor. vi. 9-11 ; Matt. xi. 26 ; Rom. ix. 15.

While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
The sovereign grace that spread the feast,
Compell'd me to come in ;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perish'd in my sin."¹

So rich is the display of the grace of the Lord to those who, out of many a kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, have been selected to form the chosen generation, of which Israel's race was the type and emblem.

(4.) *Christians are "a royal priesthood."*

Let us now turn our attention to the next descriptive appellation given to Christians: "Ye are a royal priesthood." In the preceding part of this paragraph, Christians are represented as "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" that is, in other words, consecrated to, qualified for, engaged in, the spiritual and acceptable service of God, as God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, in the discharge of all religious and moral duties. Here they are represented as "a royal priesthood."

These words admit of, and have received, various interpretations. By many they have been considered as equivalent to the declarations in the Apocalypse, that Jesus Christ makes his people "kings and priests unto God, even his Father." "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them whom thou hast given me," says our Lord, in that wonderful prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel by John. The glory the Father gave him was, that he should be the great Priest and King of his ransomed people,— "a priest upon his throne," according to the ancient oracles: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,

¹ Watts.

Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”¹ Of these glories, strictly speaking, no created being can share. But so far as the thing is possible, he makes his people possessors of priestly and regal honours. We have already seen how he makes them priests; and he makes them kings in giving them even now a noble superiority to things seen and temporal, in enabling them to trample under foot those spiritual enemies, the powers of darkness, and the lusts of their own hearts, which once reigned over them. He will at a future period, in a manner of which we can form only an indistinct conception, the obscurity of unfulfilled prediction resting on it, enable his saints to “take the kingdom,” and “reign on the earth.”² In the great day of final retribution, they, along with him, shall “judge angels;” and to them all, as overcomers, made more than conquerors through him that loved them, will it be given in that day to “sit with him on his throne, even as he also, having overcome, sat down with his Father on his throne.”³

By others the expression has been considered as indicating the exalted nature of the priesthood to which they are raised, or the noble and dignified temper in which they discharge its functions. Their priesthood is not a *plebeian*, but a *royal* priesthood, as far exalted in dignity above the Levitical priesthood as royalty is above the level of ordinary life; and they perform their priestly functions not in the servile spirit of bondage, but in the noble, kingly spirit of the adopted sons of the great King to whom they minister, —“the spirit of glory,” as the apostle calls it. Their mien and deportment are “like the children of a king,” doing the will of their royal father. Freed from all degrading sub-

¹ Rev. i. 6, v. 10; John xvii. 22; Zech. vi. 13; Ps. ii. 6, cx. 4.

² Dan. vii. 18; Rev. v. 10.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 3; Rom. viii. 37; Rev. iii. 21.

mission to human authority, they are sovereigns in spiritual things; because, as kings, they own in them no authority but that to which kings are subject—the authority of “the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Viewed in these lights, the expression suggests true and important thoughts, thoughts well fitted to elevate and stimulate the Christian mind.

But I cannot help thinking, that as the phrase is certainly borrowed from a passage in the Old Testament Scripture, the first thing to be done to ascertain its meaning, is to refer to that passage. It is to be found in the book of Exodus: “And ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.”¹ The words are quoted from the translation in common use when the apostle wrote, of which our version is a literal rendering, but we cannot doubt he means to express the meaning of the inspired text.

The meaning of the words, “ye are a kingdom,” as addressed to the Israelites, is by no means obscure. The word “kingdom” plainly signifies, not the territory, but the subjects. You are not a confused mass, a fortuitous assemblage,—you are an organized political body; and you are not a republic, a self-governing body,—you are a kingdom, the subjects of a sovereign; and you are a kingdom of priests,—you have no human supreme magistrate,—Jehovah, the object of our worship, is your King, so that the discharge of all your civil duties has a religious character, all being done to God.

Such is plainly the meaning of the language in its original application. Now what is its meaning as applied by the apostle to Christians as a body? “To you who believe there is honour.” All the honours of the ancient people of God are yours, and yours in a far higher sense than ever

¹ Ex. xix. 6.

they were theirs. They were a chosen generation, so are you. They were a kingdom of priests, and so are you. You are "a kingdom;" you form a regular social body. Christians are not a collection of isolated individuals; they are "the body of Christ, and members in particular." They are "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."¹ And they are not a republic, they are not a self-governing body; they are "a kingdom," they are the subjects of a Sovereign. They have *one* King, Jesus. They should "call no man master on earth," for they have no master on earth; "their Master is in heaven."² In everything connected with religion, they must be regulated by his will; they must believe no doctrine but what he has revealed, observe no ordinances but what he has appointed; and they must believe every doctrine he has revealed, and observe every ordinance he has appointed, and believe the doctrine because he has revealed it, and observe the ordinance because he has appointed it. For them to follow on these points the guidance of their own reason or caprice, is to usurp their Sovereign's place. For them to follow on these points the guidance of other men, is to exalt them into his throne. So far as men are concerned, they have a right to think and act for themselves in religion; but so far as their rightful Sovereign is concerned, they have no such right. They are to think as he directs them, they are to do as he bids them. This would be a hard arrangement if their king were a fallible creature, though the best of men, the wisest of angels; but instead of there being hardship or degradation in the case, this arrangement is full of honour and blessedness. Their Sovereign is the infinitely wise, righteous, holy Jehovah.

They are a kingdom, but they are "a kingdom of priests." They belong to, complexly taken they form, the kingdom

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. iv. 12.

² Matt. xxiii. 8.

that is "not of this world." They belong to a spiritual monarchy, at the head of which is Jehovah, in the person of the only-begotten Son. They are his subjects; and being his subjects, all their duties are religious duties, all exercises of the priestly function. "Whatsoever they do," in the way of duty, they are required to "do it as to the Lord." "They serve the Lord Christ." "Whatsoever they do, whether in word or deed, they do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." And "whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they do all to his glory."¹

Who can contemplate such holy dignities without a disposition to felicitate their possessors? "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," allow me to congratulate you on the dignity and blessedness of belonging to a society so illustrious as this chosen family, this priestly kingdom; for if you really are what your profession declares you to be, you do belong to it. "Happy are ye, O people saved by the Lord! who is like unto you?" "The lines have fallen to you in pleasant places, and ye have a goodly heritage." "Children of Abraham." "Children of God." Brethren of him who is "the first-born among many brethren." "Sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." "Heirs of God." "Joint heirs with Christ." "Priests of the Lord." "Ministers of your God." Ever dwelling in his sanctuary, ever engaged in his service, gratefully acknowledge that grace of the Lord to which you are indebted for all this honour, security, and happiness. It is all the gift of rich sovereign mercy. Not to you, not to you, but to him is due all the glory.

I trust you are saying in your hearts, "Who is a God like unto our God," "rich in mercy," "mighty to save?" "There is none like the God of Jeshurun." "What shall

¹ Col. iii. 23, 24; 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.

we render to the Lord for all his benefits?"¹ The best way of showing your gratitude, is by acting in a manner corresponding to the high and holy dignity to which you are raised. Conduct yourselves like members of the chosen family, denizens of the priestly kingdom. Be affectionate children; give your Father the veneration, the esteem, the love, the confidence, he so well deserves. Be obedient children. "Submit to the Father of spirits." Give due honour to Him, your elder Brother, who has been appointed "as a son over the whole family;" and remember that it is the Father's will, "that all should honour the Son as they honour himself." Seek to know and do all his will. "Observe all things whatsoever he has commanded you," and "walk in all his ordinances and commandments blameless." Cherish an enlightened, warm, influential affection for all the members of the chosen generation. "Love as brethren," and "walk in love," even as our Father and elder Brother have loved us. Be jealous of the honour of the family; be active in promoting the interests of the family; seek to be instrumental in increasing the number of the family. Are you a chosen generation, a selected race? See that you "make your calling and election sure, by adding to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."² Remember the great object for which you were chosen: both elected and selected, that ye might be conformed to the image of God's Son; that ye should be holy, and without blame before God in love; that ye should be zealous of good works; and, in one word, "as he whom we call Father is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; for it is

¹ Mic. vii. 18; Eph. ii. 4; Isa. lxiii. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 26; Ps. cxvi. 12.

² John v. 23; Matt. xxviii. 20; Eph. v. 2; 2 Pet. i. 5-7.

written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." And remember, that ye are not only children of your Father in heaven, but that ye are subjects of your Sovereign in heaven; and as Israel, "rejoice in him who made you" a kingdom of priests; as "children of Zion, be joyful in your King." "Remember that he is your Lord, and worship him."¹ You are not to be regulated, either as to faith or practice, by your own will, or by the reason or will of other men, but by his mind as made known in his word. Seek entire subjugation of mind and will to him. Have no mind but his mind, no will but his will.

And beware of invading his prerogative, in trampling on one another's rights. It is God alone who has a right to dictate to his own subjects. Let us remember, that "for this cause Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he should be the Lord of the dead and of the living"—of his own people, in life and in death. Beware of attempting to lord it over one another's consciences. "Why, then, dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God," "the great God our Saviour, Jesus Christ." "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of *himself*," not of his brother, "to God."

Finally, never forget the sacred character of your relation as subjects—that ye are sacerdotal subjects, ministering to a Divine Sovereign. Always think, and feel, and act, as in the holy place, in the immediate presence of "the Holy, Holy, Holy One;" let your whole lives be an act of worship, as well as an act of allegiance: "Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to his name; and to do good, and to com-

¹ Ps. cxlix. 2, xlv. 11.

municate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."¹

(5.) *Christians are a "holy nation."*

The next descriptive appellation of Christians which our text brings before us for consideration is, "A holy nation." This, like those which precede it, is borrowed from the language of the Old Testament in reference to the ancient people of God. "Ye shall be to me a holy nation," said Jehovah to Israel, by Moses, at Sinai, immediately before giving the law. "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God," said Moses to his countrymen, when just about to cross the Jordan. And in the promulgation of the various laws given to them, we often meet with these words: "Ye shall be holy," or "be ye holy, for I am holy."²

Israel was a "nation," a large body of men, residing in the same neighbourhood, subject to the same government, regulated by the same laws, distinguished by the same customs, having common rights, interests, and enemies. Previously to the giving of the law, Israel was "a generation," a race, a family, a chosen generation; but it was at Sinai that they became a "kingdom, a nation; a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Then began to be fulfilled the promises made to Abraham, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply: a nation, and a company of nations, shall be of thee."³

Israel was "a holy nation." There can be no reasonable doubt, that by far the greater part of those individuals who were really morally holy in the world at that time, belonged to this nation; but when, as a nation, they are called

¹ Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

² Ex. xix. 6; Deut. vii. 6; Lev. xix. 2, xx. 7, etc. etc.

³ Gen. xii. 2.

"holy," the meaning obviously is, separated from the nations who were devoted to idolatry, and consecrated to the service of Jehovah, the only living and true God. Such is the import of the expression, "a holy nation," as applied to ancient Israel.

We are now prepared to answer the more important and interesting question, What are the truths respecting the situation and character of Christians, which the appellation, as addressed to them, is intended to suggest? Like the denomination, generation or race, kingdom or people, it indicates that they are, properly speaking, not a number of unconnected individuals, but a society; not disjointed members, but a "body fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." They do not indeed reside all in the same geographical district. Even those of them who are more immediately addressed in the text, were "strangers," scattered over a wide region, residing in the midst of various nations. At that time, members of the society, the spiritual nation, were to be found throughout every part of the Roman empire, and even beyond its bounds, "in every nation under heaven;" and since that time, "the holy nation" has still more fully realized the description given of it, as "a people redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."¹

Yet in a sense suitable to the spiritual nature of the society, they all dwell together: they are all "a people near to Jehovah," and therefore near to one another. They all dwell in the spiritual Canaan, in the "Jerusalem, which is the mother of them all." They all "dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The whole of the tribes of the spiritual Israel encamp around "the ark of testimony," "the true taber-

¹ Rev. v. 9.

nacle, which God pitched, and not man."¹ The ordinary limitations of time and place do not indeed affect this society. This nation is identical with the chosen generation—the family in heaven, and on earth, called by one name. This accounts for their being called a nation, which always suggests the idea of great numbers. A family may be few, but a nation must be numerous. He who joins the society here referred to, obtains a citizenship more honourable, and connecting him with a wider field of association, than the citizenship of ancient Rome in all its glory; he joins a commonwealth, of which the commonwealth of Israel even in its most flourishing state was but an imperfect figure. He "sits down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father." He joins "the church of the living God;" a society which, even as now existing on earth, is "a multitude," which could not easily be numbered; and he "comes also to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect."²

But "a nation" is not merely a numerous body of men. It is a numerous body of men, subject to the same government, regulated by the same laws; a government and laws which distinguish it from other nations. In this sense, the

¹ "There is now no more any place on earth where the whole church assembles for worship; but they all assemble in the heavenly Jerusalem, where Jesus is, the antitype of that on earth to which the church of Israel assembled, and towards which they worshipped from all corners of the land. Hence they on earth have their conversation, Phil. iii. 20; and unto that place the tribes of God go up now worshipping God, all serving in the newness of the spirit: and there are no worshippers now but spiritual worshippers. Thus there is an end put to all controversies about earthly holy places, and temples of God made with hands." John iv. 20, 21.—JOHN GLAS.

² Ps. cxlviii. 14; Gal. iv. 26; Ps. xci. 1; Eph. iii. 15; Matt. viii. 11; Heb. xii. 22, 23.

appellation is strikingly descriptive of true Christians. The whole race of men, with the exception of true Christians, are the subjects of "the god of this world," the Prince of darkness. They "lie under the" dominion of that "wicked one;" they "serve divers lusts and pleasures;" they "yield themselves the servants of sin; and they yield their members," the various faculties and capacities of their nature, "to sin, as the instruments of unrighteousness."¹ Christians have been "turned" from the service of the god of this world "to the service of the living and true God," "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." To his sovereignty, as administered by his Son, to whom he has given "all power in heaven and in earth," they have submitted their minds, their hearts, their consciences, their conduct. "Jehovah is their Judge; Jehovah is their Lawgiver; Jehovah is their King." "They serve the Lord Christ;" subject to his authority, they are regulated by his law. Other men regulate themselves by various principles, to which they give the authority of law: the law of interest; the law of custom; the law of honour; the law of public opinion; the law of caprice. Christians regulate themselves by the law of God. The Bible is their statute book. They are cheerfully subject to all lawful ordinances of man; but it is "for the Lord's sake," because the Lord commands them to be so. But when the law of man is opposed to the law of God, the principle upon which they act is, "We must obey God rather than man." They are persuaded of the principle, and act on it, "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon." The description which Haman gave of the Jews, slightly altered, is very applicable to "the true circumcision:" They are "a people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the laws"

¹ 1 John v. 19; Rom. vi. 13.

of man, when these are opposed to the law of their Sovereign in heaven.¹

Christians, also, are with propriety termed "a nation," for they are distinguished by the same customs; and their customs are different from, and opposed to, the customs which generally prevail among men. They all seek often to be alone; they all are given to prayer; they all "lay up treasures in heaven;" they all "deny themselves;" they all look not only, not chiefly, at their own things, but at the things of Christ, and of others. They all forgive, instead of avenging injuries.² These are but a specimen of their peculiar customs. Their whole mode of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting, is decidedly different from that of other men. They are in the world, but not of it.

Further, Christians, like a nation, have common and peculiar immunities and privileges. They are all made free by the Son—made "free indeed"—"free with the liberty of the children of God;" they are all "blessed with heavenly and spiritual blessings;" all "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" all secured of the guidance of the good Spirit, and the guardianship of angels.³ By these, and a variety of other privileges, which belong to none but themselves, they are distinguished from all other bodies of men.

Like a nation, Christians have a common cause, the cause of their common Lord; common interests, the interests of truth, and holiness, and peace, of God's glory, and man's salvation. They are engaged in a war with common enemies—ignorance, error, superstition, sin in all its forms, and the powerful being of whom all these are the works. They "wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; with the rulers of the darkness of this world;

¹ Matt. vi. 24; Esther iii. 8.

² Matt. v. 20; Phil. ii. 4.

³ John viii. 36; Eph. i. 3; James ii. 5.

with spiritual wickednesses in high places." And they carry on the war in the same way. "The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God," for the accomplishment of their purpose.¹

But Christians are not only a nation—they are "a holy nation." The term holy, or sacred, properly signifies separated from other persons or things, and dedicated to a sacred purpose. The Babylonian armies are termed by Isaiah God's "sanctified or holy ones,"² because selected by God as the instruments of his righteous judgment against Israel. The Sabbath is called holy, because set apart from secular to religious purposes; the vessels of the tabernacle and temple are called holy for a similar reason; and the Israelites are very often represented as holy, because separated from the rest of mankind to be the depositaries of religious truth and worship, "till the seed should come, in reference to whom the promises were made."³

When the word is applied to Christians, either as individuals or as a body, it is employed in the same general sense, but with a higher reference. The Christian Church, though figuratively a nation, has nothing secular in its constitution or object. It is completely separated, completely distinct, from all worldly societies. It is not political, it is not commercial, it is not philosophical; it is religious. If it is a kingdom, it is "a kingdom not of this world;"⁴ if it is a nation, it is "a holy," sacred "nation." And its genuine members are all holy, taken out from among the world lying under the wicked one; dedicated to the service of God and his Son, by the sprinkling of the blood of atonement, by the washing of the water of regeneration, and by their own inward consent and outward profession. They are all sanc-

¹ Eph. vi. 12; 2 Cor. x. 4.

² Isa. xiii. 3.

³ Ex. xvi. 23, xxv. 2; Deut. vii. 6; Dan. viii. 24; Lev. viii. 9, xvi. 4, 33.

⁴ John xviii. 36.

tified ones; "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they might be holy, and without blame before God in love." In consequence of the Saviour sanctifying himself, setting apart himself to save them, they are set apart, sanctified by the truth to serve him: for "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to God a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." "That he might sanctify the people"—that he might constitute the chosen ones a holy nation—"by his own blood, he suffered without the gate." He went out of "the Jerusalem" that then was the type of all that is corrupt both in secular and ecclesiastical association, and his saved people are to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach," devoted to God as he was devoted to God, determined to do and suffer the will of God as he did, apart from the world lying in wickedness.¹

They are a people *entirely* devoted or sacred: their faculties, their property, their time, their opportunities, their bodies, their spirits, are all HIS, and they cannot devote them to purposes different from his, without being guilty of desecration and sacrilege. It is to this state of things that the prophet Isaiah looks forward when he says, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken;" and

¹ Eph. v. 25-27; Heb. xiii. 12, 13.

Zechariah, when he says, "In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Every day is, or ought to be, a Sabbath-day; every meal a sacrament; for whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they should do all to the glory of God; "and whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they should do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him." Among them "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether he lives, he lives to the Lord; whether he dies, he dies to the Lord. In life and in death he is the Lord's."¹

I think it not improbable that the apostle had a particular object in giving Christians, as a body, the designation, "a holy nation," rather than the more ordinary phrase in the Old Testament, "a holy people."² It is not without a purpose that he quotes Ex. xix. 6, rather than Isa. lxii. 11. The very name nations,³ or Gentiles, was hateful to the Jews. They were "the people;"⁴ all the rest of the world were the nations: the people were holy and beloved, the nations profane and abominable in the sight of God. But under the new economy, the chosen name of the people of God is "nation," there being now no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but all are one in Christ. As the Apostle Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;" but all "believers are one" nation "in Christ Jesus." And "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs

¹ Isa. lxii. 10-12; Zech. xiv. 20, 21; Col. iii. 17; Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

² *ἔθνος* rather than *λαός*.

³ *ἔθνη*

⁴ *ἐπὶ*

according to the promises." The holy nation is "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that we should walk in them." "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"—"a holy nation."¹

(6.) *Christians are "a peculiar people."*

The next appellation that calls for our consideration is, "A peculiar people." To a mere English reader, these words convey the idea, a perfectly just one, that they to whom they are applied are a people, a collection of men, who have many peculiarities about them,—many things which distinguish them from other men, and other bodies of men: they are peculiar in their origin, their principles, their dispositions, their habits and customs; their hopes,

¹ Gal. iii. 28, 29; Eph. ii. 10-19.

their fears, their pursuits, their privileges. In this case the designation would include all that is expressed in all the other designations, and perhaps something more.

But the truth is, the English expression conveys very imperfectly the meaning of the original term. It is literally "a people for a purchased possession," or for a treasure;¹ for the word employed is used in both senses: in the first, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Until the redemption of the purchased possession;"² in the second, in the passage of the book of Exodus from which this is quoted, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me."³ In Malachi it is rendered "jewels," and on the margin, "special treasure."⁴ The significancy here does not lie chiefly, if at all, in the word "people," which does not, like generation or race, kingdom and nation, suggest any important idea; though "people" does seem to be used as distinctive of a respectable assembly, in opposition to an illiterate and vulgar rabble.⁵ "No doubt ye are the *people*."⁶ It lies in what is said about this people. They are a people "for a purchased possession," for a special treasure. The sentiments which the appellation seems intended to convey are these two: That they are the subjects of the divine peculiar property, and the objects of the divine peculiar regard.

They are God's "purchased possession," his "special treasure." Like the preceding appellation, this was originally employed as descriptive of the Israelitish people. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine." "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth." "The Lord

¹ Λαὸς εἰς ἀποκτήνησιν.

² Eph. i. 14.

³ Ex. xix. 5.

⁴ Mal. iii. 16.

⁵ "In a state of rude nature there is no such thing as a people. A number of men in themselves have no corporate capacity."—BURKE.

⁶ Job xii. 2.

hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised to thee.”¹ The whole universe is God’s inalienable property. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell in it.”² All the nations were God’s property; but, so far as the thing was possible, they had alienated themselves as divine property. They had given themselves up into the hands of God’s enemy, to be used by him as his property. But Jehovah, while allowing the other nations to remain in the hands of him to whom they had sold themselves, rescued Israel out of the hands of Pharaoh, and out of the hand of him of whom Pharaoh was but a type and instrument, and they became, as it were, doubly his property, and he treated them as an object of “peculiar favour.” “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel: for the Lord’s *portion* was his people; Israel was the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with-fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat: and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.” “He showed his word to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel.” “In Judah was he known; his name was great in Israel. In Salem also was his taber-

¹ Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6, xiv. 2, xxvi. 18.

² Ps. xxiv. 1.

nacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion." And "many times did he deliver them." "He gave Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them." "He suffered no man to do them wrong" with impunity; "he reprov'd kings for their sake." "What nation was there so great, who had Jehovah so nigh to them, as the Lord their God was in all things that they called on him for?" "What nation was there so great, that had statutes and judgments so righteous as all the law which he set before them?"¹ Thus was ancient Israel a people for a purchased possession, for a special treasure to Jehovah, the subjects of his peculiar property, the objects of his peculiar regard.

But these glorious appellations are applicable in a far higher sense to the spiritual Israel. They are God's peculiar property. They are his in a sense different from, higher than, that in which they originally and all other human beings were his. It is difficult to find in human affairs anything that so corresponds to the important facts referred to, as to illustrate them; but we shall attempt it. Let us conceive what we know is not possible, that a wealthy man should have righteous property in a great multitude of his fellow-men, and let us conceive of him as just and kind in his dealings with them; but they commit crimes which expose them to the vengeance of the law, and they at the same time renounce subjection to him, and become the willing slaves of his worst enemy. Having a great regard for them, he buys them off from the law's vengeance; and he at the same time prevails on them to wish to return to his service, and by superior force obliges his powerful enemy, however reluctantly, to quit his hold of them; and, having got them again back to his own estate, he bestows on them peculiar marks of his kindness. Would not such

¹ Deut. xxxii. 8-14; Ps. cxlvii. 19, lxxvi. 1, 2, cvi. 43; Isa. xliii. 3; Ps. cv. 14, 15; Deut. iv. 7, 8.

redeemed criminals, such ransomed slaves, though his property originally, be now doubly his—his purchased possession; and might they not well be called his special treasure? The figure is imperfect, but it may assist your minds in forming distinct and accurate conceptions of the case before us. Christians have been “redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and spot,” from guilt, the judicial displeasure of God, and everlasting destruction. They have been “bought with a price;” “redeemed to God” by the blood of his Son; “delivered from the wrath to come.” And they have also been, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” delivered from sin and Satan, and the present evil world; “redeemed from all iniquity, that they may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” By the effectual working of the good Spirit through the instrumentality of the word, they are freed from the degrading bondage of sin, and made to “walk at liberty, keeping God’s commandments;” feeling, and delighting to feel, that they are “not their own,” but wholly and for ever his, who has bought them by “a price all price beyond,” redeemed them by an arm so “full of power” and of mercy.¹

And as they are the subjects of his peculiar property, so are they the objects of his peculiar regard. They are his special treasure, his jewels; he heaps on them tokens of his regard. They are his vineyard; of which he says, “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment. I will keep it night and day.” He “blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;” so that they may well say, “Who is a God like unto our God, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; Rev. v. 9; 1 Thess. i. 10; Tit. ii. 14.

have compassion on us ; he will subdue our iniquities ; and he will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." "The Lord their God, in the midst of them, is mighty ; he will save, he will rejoice over them with joy ; he will rest in his love ; he will joy over them with singing." "He giveth unto them eternal life : and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand." He gives many distinct proofs, both to others and to themselves, that they are the objects of his peculiar regard. "All things are theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, whether in life, or death ; all is theirs, for they are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." Even in the present state, he makes it evident that the Lord hath set apart the godly man for himself ; and "in the day that he shall make up his jewels," collect his treasure, he will bestow on them such "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory" as shall make all the intelligent universe see and acknowledge that they are *HIS* : in a peculiar sense his property, his portion ; those whom he is determined to honour and bless, to the greatest degree in which created beings can be made possessors of dignity and blessedness.¹

And all the glory, all the felicity, included in God treating them as a people for a purchased possession, a peculiar treasure, is obtained by connection with Christ, and is a further demonstration of his grace to those on whom it is bestowed. In coming to Christ ye were made such a people, and in this surely "ye have tasted that the Lord was gracious."

Is it possible to estimate too highly those honours, and advantages, and delights, to which Christians are, by the grace of their Lord, raised ? Is it not obviously and undeniably true, that "the things which God laid up for

¹ Isa. xxvii. 2, 3 ; Eph. i. 3 ; Mic. vii. 18, 19 ; Zeph. iii. 17 ; John x. 28 ; 1 Cor. iii. 21-23 ; Mal. iii. 17, 18.

those who love him," under the new economy, and which he has made known to us by his Holy Spirit, are what "eye had not seen, what ear had not heard, and what it had never entered," it could never have entered, "into the heart of man?"¹ How glorious is the society they are connected with, embracing in it all the true excellence in the universe! They are, indeed, associates of no ignoble confraternity, citizens of no mean city; and how rich, how varied, how invaluable, are the privileges which, as members of the holy nation, of the peculiar people, they enjoy!

How strong a motive to gratitude, and obedience, and submission! Well does it become every Christian, "gathered from among the heathen," and "made to inherit the throne of glory," to say with David, "Who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, the son of thine hand-maid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will take the cup of salvation. I will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people." Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from my vain conversation, I will no longer fashion myself according to my former lusts in my ignorance; but as he who has called me is holy, I will be holy in all manner of conversation. Bought with a price, I am not my own, and will glorify him who redeemed me, in my body and in my spirit, which are His.²

What an abundant source of consolation and support under evil of every kind does this view of the Christian's situation afford to him! Jehovah will take care of his own, of what is committed to him, of what has been

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

² 2 Sam. vii. 18; Ps. cxvi. 12-14; 1 Cor. vi. 20.

redeemed by the blood of his Son, rescued by the power of his Spirit, blessed with the tokens of his peculiar regard. Fear not, Christian, whatever may be the number and amount of thy experienced or anticipated perplexities and trials, and bereavements and sorrows. Listen to the voice of Him whose thou art, and whom thou servest: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle on thee. For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." And when HE thus says, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee," surely thou mayest boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what either man or devil can do to me."¹

What a powerful incentive is here offered, to seek "part and lot" in this holy nation, among this peculiar people! All who belong to it were once "aliens from the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise." They were as "sheep going astray; but they have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." And how were they brought near? By the blood of the cross, by the power of the Spirit, by the faith of the truth. They believed on Christ, they came to him, and thus "they tasted that the Lord is gracious." Does not their happiness proclaim, louder than any language, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good?" The way, though, alas! unfrequented, is an open one. The grace of the Lord is not "a well shut up, a fountain sealed." "Return, ye back-

¹ Isa. xli. 10, xliii. 2; Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

sliding children ; I have redeemed you." "I, even I, am he who blotteth out transgressions, for my own sake." "I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely." Believe the truth as it is in Jesus, come to HIM, and all the blessings of salvation are yours. "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath not life." "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It may, it must be yours, if you do not obstinately refuse to receive what is freely given us of God ;¹ refuse, neglect to receive it, and you are undone for ever, and must receive what you have earned : "the wages of sin—*death* ;"

"Future death,
And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,
Like that which sends us to the dusty grave ;
But unrepealable, enduring death—
Ages of future misery."²

Escape, then, from the city of destruction ; break off all connection with "the sinful nation," "the people of God's curse." "Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain : escape to the mountain," to the city of refuge, the mystical Jerusalem, whose name is Jehovah-Tzidkenu, "the Lord our righteousness." Escape lest thou be consumed : delay is madness, may be ruin : "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."³

The statements now made have not produced their proper effect if they have not excited in our bosoms an earnest desire, which finds its appropriate utterance in these beautiful words of the Psalmist, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people : O visit me with thy salvation ; that I may see the good of thy chosen,

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 25 ; Jer. iii. 14, 22 ; Isa. xliii. 25 ; Hos. xiv. 4 ; 1 John v. 12 ; Rom. vi. 23.

² Cowper.

³ Gen. xix. 17 ; Jer. xxxiii. 16 ; Isa. xlix. 8 ; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

the chosen generation ; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, the holy nation ; that I may glory with thine inheritance," "the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the special treasure."¹ That prayer, offered in faith, is sure to be answered ; and that prayer offered and answered, we are made up for eternity. "We have all, and abound." Our need is supplied according to God's glorious riches. We have "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Our joy is full, full for ever.

(7.) *Christians are "called to show forth the praises of God."*

The next appellation applied to Christians is, "Called to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." To the consideration of this let us now proceed.

The allusion to ancient Israel which pervades the previous part of the verse, and attention to which we have found of so much use to bring out its meaning, is to be recognised here also. Jehovah called Israel out of Egypt, a state of slavery and degradation—figuratively termed by the Psalmist "a state of darkness and the shadow of death"—into a state of liberty and dignity—figuratively described as "the light of the countenance of Jehovah," probably with a reference to the supernatural bright cloud, the emblem of the divine presence—to be to himself "a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people," in order to manifest by them his own infinite excellences, his power, his wisdom, his righteousness, his benignity, his faithfulness. When God "went to redeem Israel for a people to himself, it was to make to himself a name."² When "he brought them up out of the sea," to use the sublime language of Isaiah, "with Moses, the shepherd of his flock, when he put his Holy Spirit within him, and led them by

¹ Ps. cvi. 4, 5.

² 2 Sam. vii. 23.

his right hand, dividing the waters before him, it was to make to himself an everlasting, a glorious name."¹ And of Israel, thus called and redeemed by him, he says, "I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." "I have caused to cleave to me," says Jehovah by the prophet Jeremiah, "I have caused to cleave to me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah; that they may be to me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory."²

The great economies of Providence and Redemption form but one system of divine manifestation; a connected series of revelations of "the eternal power and godhead," the infinite wisdom, righteousness, and benignity of Him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things." The Mosaic economy, the history of the Israelitish people, is a very interesting chapter in this book, in which God has manifested his character. All that God did for Israel in making them a nation,—all the privileges he bestowed on them as a nation, all the deliverances he vouchsafed them, and all the judgments he inflicted on them,—all that he did to them, and all that he did by them, was intended for the revelation of his character, for the manifestation of his glory. Israel became to him a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth his praise. His dispensations to Israel manifested his character, not only to them, but to the surrounding nations. He made "his wrath and his power," his wisdom and his mercy, known in the redemption of Israel, and in the destruction of their proud oppressors. "He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be

¹ Isa. lxiii. 11, 12. "Respectus habetur ad caput xv. Exodi, in quo describitur canticum laudis quod Israelitæ post educationem ex Egypto per mare rubrum, in gloriam DEI liberatoris composuerunt."—BEDA.

² Isa. xliii. 7; Jer. xiii. 11.

known, and that men might know that he was Jehovah." And this was not only their design and tendency ; it was to some extent their effect. Jethro was not at all singular in the sentiments he avowed in his address to his son-in-law : " Now know I that Jehovah is greater than all gods ; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."¹

Israel was intended, not merely passively, but also actively, to declare the character, to show forth the praises, of Jehovah. While the nations around them were " worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, having changed the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things,"² throughout the land of Israel was proclaimed the sublime truth, " Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one." They were his " witnesses ;" and in the holy oracles, which they preserved most faithfully, in the ordinances of worship which they maintained, and in the degree in which their characters were moulded by that revelation and those ordinances, did they shine as the lights of a darkened world, and hold forth to their benighted fellow-men the truth respecting the Supreme Being.

These observations respecting the manner in which ancient Israel after the flesh was called by Jehovah out of darkness into light, to be a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people, in order to show forth his praise, will be found of material use to us in our inquiry into the higher sense, the deeper meaning, in which these statements are applicable to the spiritual Israel.

Taking them as our key, let us now proceed to ask, What is this calling here spoken of ? Who is its author ? What is its object ? And how does such a call from such a being, for such an object, afford illustration of the graciousness of the Lord to those who receive it ?

¹ Ex. xviii. 11.

² Rom. i. 21-25.

To the first of these questions the answer is short and easy. As the calling of ancient Israel was the divine command and invitation by Moses to leave Egypt, and enter on the privileges and duties of God's peculiar people, first in the wilderness and then in Canaan,—a calling made effectual by a series of divine interpositions; so the calling of the spiritual Israel is the divine call and invitation to enter, through the belief of the truth, on the privileges and duties of his spiritual peculiar people, first on earth, then in heaven. It is this invitation, rendered effectual by the operation of the good Spirit leading them to comply with it, which the apostle calls the Christian's "high" and "heavenly," "holy" and "hopeful" "calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" "a calling into the fellowship of God's Son," whereby we, who were the children of the devil, become, like Him, the children of God; we, who were vile and debased, "without God," "far from God," become, like Him, "kings and priests to God;" we, who were profane and of the world, become in our measure, like Him, the Holy One of God; we, who had denied God's property in us, and who were the fit objects of his judicial displeasure and moral disapprobation, become, like Him, the subjects of his peculiar property, the objects of his special love. This is the effectual calling, so well described in our Shorter Catechism as "the work of God's Holy Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is offered to us in the gospel," and thus enter on the enjoyment of all the blessings of the "redemption that is in him."¹

¹ Phil. iii. 14; Heb. iii. 1; 2 Tim. i. 9; Eph. i. 18, iv. 4; Short. Cat. Q. 31.

It is equally easy to answer the question, Who is the author of this calling? There is no mistaking who He is, who is described as "He who called Christians out of darkness into his marvellous light." At first sight we might perhaps suppose that this is a descriptive appellation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when we look at the passages of Scripture where this calling is mentioned—and they are numerous—we shall come to the conclusion that it is God the Father, who in the whole restorative economy sustains the majesty of the Divinity. In the new creation, "all things are of God, through Christ Jesus,"¹ by the Spirit. The call to ancient Israel was the call of Jehovah by Moses. The call to the spiritual Israel is the call of Jehovah by Jesus, speaking in his word, working by his Spirit. His call alone is effectual. His word is the word that "leaps forth at once into effect; that calls for things that be not, and they are;" the word that makes men what it calls them to be.

The third question, What is the design of this calling? will require a somewhat more detailed reply. They are called to "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." The word "praises" is more literally rendered in the margin, as you may observe, "virtues."² It is a general name for the excellences of the Divine Being, His power, and wisdom, and holiness, and benignity, especially as displayed in calling them, and in the privileges, honours, and blessings to which they are called. The design, then, of calling Christians to the enjoyment of their peculiar privileges was, that the excellences of the Divine Author of their calling might be displayed. This is the great ultimate end of God in everything: the manifestation of his own excellence. "The Lord hath made all things for himself."³ "To him," as

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18.² ἀρεάς.³ Prov. xvi. 4.

well as "of him, and through him, are all things." "For him," as well as "by him, are all things."¹

There is no end so grand, so comprehensive of all other desirable ends, so worthy of the all-perfect Being, as this. "The highest agent cannot work but for the highest end: so that, as the apostle speaks, when God would confirm his covenant by an oath, he swears by Himself, because he could swear by no greater; so in all he must be the end of his own actions, because there is no greater or better end: yea, none by infinite odds, so great or good."² It is plain, that just in the degree that God manifests his power, and wisdom, and goodness, must the order and happiness of the inanimate and sensitive creation be promoted; and just in the degree in which his moral excellences are displayed to rightly constituted, intelligent beings, must their happiness be increased. The more they know of God, the more they love God, as known; the more they are conformed to God, the holier and the happier are they.

Christians, as the called of God, are intended to show forth the excellences of God, both passively and actively. Those wonderful dispensations of power and righteousness and benignity, the incarnation and sacrifice of the divine Son, and the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit, are the most remarkable displays which probably ever have been or ever will be made to the intelligent universe of the "virtues," the powers, the excellences, of the divine character. Everything else, when compared with these, may be termed, to use the prophet Habakkuk's expression, "the hiding" rather than the manifestation of his excellences. If a man wishes to know the true character of God, let him study it as embodied in these dispensations; let him look at God in Christ—"the glory of God

¹ Rom. xi. 36; Heb. ii. 10.

² Leighton.

in the face of Christ Jesus.”¹ We know that they were intended to serve this purpose, not only to men, but to higher orders of intelligent beings. We know that such things took place, “to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known by,” through means of, “the church”—the called ones, the chosen generation, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people—not only “the manifold wisdom of God,”² but the riches of his grace, the exceeding greatness of his power, the unfathomable depth of his knowledge, the immutability of his purpose, the energy of his wrath, the omnipotence of his love.

And we know, too, that they answer this purpose. They awaken the holy curiosity of those exalted holy spirits; and though they feel their highest powers overtaken in the study, “into these things they desire to look.”³ They discover in Jehovah a depth of excellence, which, though they believed it to exist, they had never seen before exhibited, and they had never distinctly before conceived of. Forms of moral loveliness present themselves to their minds, more beautiful than any they had ever imagined; they burn with a more intense devotion; they are penetrated with a higher sense of entire confidence in the All-excellent One: the salvation of man thus adding to the happiness of angels. So glorious is the illustration that is given of the divine character in these dispensations, that the inspired prophet, when contemplating it, breaks out into those rapturous strains: “I have blotted out,” says Jehovah to the spiritual Israel, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return to me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing,” exclaims the prophet, “O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O

¹ Hab. iii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 19, iv. 6. ² Eph. iii. 10. ³ 1 Pet. i. 12.

forest, and every tree therein : for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."¹ And this is true, not only with regard to the grand dispensations in which all the called ones are equally interested ; but the individual history of each of them is a mirror, in which "the ministering spirits who minister to them as heirs of salvation," see reflected the excellences of Him who works all for them, in them, and by them.

But the called ones are not merely passive instruments ; they are agents in showing forth Jehovah's praise. The manifestation of God made to them in their calling, and the privileges into which it conducts them, produce in their minds just views of the divine character, and a corresponding mode of thinking and feeling, and speaking and acting, so that they cannot but show forth the praises of him who has called them. This is the great design of God in giving them the privilege. If they are "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," it is "that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace."² If they are planted by him as "trees of righteousness," it is "that he might be glorified."³ If they are "bought with a price," it is that they may "glorify him with their souls, and with their bodies, which are his."⁴ If they are "filled with the fruits of righteousness," it is "to the praise and glory of God."⁵ If they "obtain the inheritance," it is "to the praise of his glory." If "the purchased possession" at last is redeemed completely and for ever from all evil, still it is "to the praise of his glory."⁶

How the holy, heavenly temper and conduct of the called ones answer the great purpose of their calling, is very beautifully described by Archbishop Leighton : "The virtues

¹ Isa. xliv. 22, 23.

² Eph. i. 5.

³ Isa. lxi. 3.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁵ Phil. i. 11.

⁶ Eph. i. 11-14.

that are in them tell us of his virtues, as brooks lead us to their springs. When a Christian can quietly repose and trust on God in a matter of very great difficulty, wherein there is no other thing to stay him but God alone, this declares plainer than words that there is strength enough in God that bears him up; that there must be in him that real abundance of goodness and truth that the word speaks of him. Abraham believed, and gave glory to God: this is what every believer can do to declare the truth of God. He can rely, and show that he relies, on it, and thus set to his seal that God is true. Men hear that there is a God who is infinitely holy, but they can neither see him nor his holiness; but when they perceive some lineaments of it in the faces of his children which are in none others, this may convince them that its perfection, which must be somewhere, can be nowhere else but in their heavenly Father. When those that are his peculiar plants bring forth the fruits of holiness, which naturally they yielded not, it testifies a supernatural work of his hand that planted them; and the more fruitful they are, the greater his praise. 'Herein is my Father glorified,' says our Saviour, 'that ye bring forth much fruit.'"¹ Their lives on earth should be a hymn of praise to him who called them; and we know that in heaven, throughout eternity, they rest not day nor night, but in a manner suited to their enlarged capacities and exalted station, without interruption "show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into marvellous light:" "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and art, and art to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."²

It only remains that we say a word or two on the manifestation of the graciousness of the Lord to Christians,

¹ John xv. 8.

² Rev. iv. 8, 11.

afforded by their being "called to show forth the praises" of Him who called them. To be made capable of, disposed to and actually to be employed in, showing forth the praises of Jehovah, is the highest dignity and happiness which can be conferred on created intelligent beings. This was the happiness of man in Paradise; this is the essence of the happiness of the blessed in heaven. "It is," indeed,—to refer to the description of man's original state by a master mind,¹ equally applicable to man's restored state,—"It is a most delectable and pleasant state to be separated to the entertainment of the divine presence, and the manifestation of the divine glory: 'Thou art mine, and for me thou livest. Thee, above all my works, I choose out for myself. Thine employment shall be no laborious, painful drudgery, unless it can be painful to receive the large communications of immense goodness, light, life, and love, that shall of their own accord be perpetually flowing in upon thee, and to express in thy whole character and conduct thy sense of my infinite greatness and goodness!'" Surely this is a high privilege; and as, like all the privileges of Christians, it is enjoyed only in Christ Jesus in consequence of believing on him, coming to him, building on him; as it not more certainly comes from God than it comes by Christ; as, but for his mediation, this honour, this blessedness, could never have found its way to one of our fallen race; we may well say, that in enjoying it, Christians "taste that the Lord is gracious."

It becomes the called of the Lord to avail themselves of the privileges, and to perform the duties, of their high and holy and heavenly calling. By your lips, by your lives, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," honour Him who has called you, Him into whose fellowship you have been called. "God's dear Son" did so. Yes, "he

¹ Howe.

glorified his Father on the earth ; he finished the work he gave him to do." His most ardent prayer was, " Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Nothing could shake his determination as to this : " Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? " Shall I say, " Father, save me from this hour ? " No ; " for this cause I came to this hour." I will say, " Father, glorify thy name."¹ And now in heaven he declares his Father's name to his brethren, and in the great congregation he shows forth his praise.²

" Let this mind be in you that was in him." " Praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent : his glory is above the earth and heaven. He exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints ; even of the children of Israel, a people near to him." " Praise ye the Lord, for he is good ; sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." " Bless the Lord, O house of Israel : bless the Lord, O house of Aaron : bless the Lord, O house of Levi : ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." " Praise the Lord, call on his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord ; for he hath done excellent things : this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion : for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." " Publish with the voice of thanksgiving, tell of all his wondrous works." Let every called, redeemed one, adopt the Psalmist's resolution : " I will praise thee, even thy truth, O my God : unto thee will I sing, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee ; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed." " I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart ; and I will glorify thy name for ever-

¹ John xvii. 1, 4, xii. 27, 28.

² Ps. xxii. 22 ; Heb. ii. 12.

more. For great is thy mercy towards me ; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live ; I will sing praise to my God while I have any being. My meditation of him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord."¹ O what a heaven on earth might, would Christians have, were they acting worthy of their high and holy calling, as a holy priesthood, "offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name."

But are all here among "the called, and chosen, and faithful?"² Would God it were so ! But I more than fear that there are persons here, who, though called, often called, affectionately, earnestly called, have never been effectually called ; who are yet without the pale of the chosen race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, having no part nor lot in their peculiar privileges. For this class we ought to feel the deepest commiseration, the tenderest pity ; and the best way of showing this is to endeavour to make them understand their real position. My dear fellow-immortals, there can be no doubt your duty is to show forth the praises of God. That is the first duty of every intelligent creature, and nothing can release you from its obligation. God will be glorified in you whether you will or not. If you will not give him glory, he will make your rebellion and its fearful consequences praise him. How loud is the acclaim which rises among the holy part of God's intelligent creation, "when the smoke of the torment" of the irreclaimably wicked "ascendeth up for ever and ever !" "Alleluia ; and again they cry, Alleluia." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are all thy

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 13, 14, cxxxv. 3, 4, 19, 20 ; Isa. xii. 4-6 ; Ps. xxvi. 7, lxxi. 22, 23, lxxxvi. 12, 13, civ. 33, 34.

² Heb. xiii. 15 ; Rev. xvii. 14.

ways, O King of saints!"¹ Righteous is Jehovah, and righteous are his judgments. In your present state you are morally incapable of praising God or glorifying his name. You never will do anything really glorifying to God, till, casting down the weapons of rebellion against him, you, in the faith of the truth, "kiss the Son," whom he has "set as his King on his holy hill of Zion."² Listen to the call, come to Jesus, glorify God by crediting the testimony he has given of a free and full salvation in his Son for the chief of sinners; and then, not till then, "tasting that the Lord is gracious," will you find yourselves sweetly constrained to devote yourselves entirely to the honour of Him, whom you will then see and feel to be infinitely excellent, amiable, and kind,—the Saviour, your Saviour. You will no longer be able to "live to yourselves," to make self your great object. GOD will appear to be what he is—"all in all;" and this will be your resolution, and your rejoicing: "Whether I live, I live to the Lord; whether I die, I die to the Lord: living and dying, I am the Lord's. Whether I eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do, I will do all to the glory of God. Whatever I do, whether in word or deed, I will do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father." "My mouth shall speak the praises of the Lord: and let *all flesh* bless his holy name for ever and ever." "Oh that there were in you such a heart to honour God, that it might be well with you for ever."³ It cannot be well with you otherwise, either in time or eternity.

¹ Rev. xix. 3, xv. 3, xix. 2.

² Ps. ii. 6, 12.

³ Rom. xiv. 8; 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17; Ps. cxlv. 22; Deut. v. 29.

(8.) *Christians are "called out of darkness into God's marvellous light."*

The next descriptive designation of true Christians which presents itself to our consideration is, "Called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." The language is obviously figurative; and here, as in every similar case, the first thing to be done is to endeavour to obtain a distinct idea of the figure employed. This is obviously necessary in order to our satisfactorily arriving at the thought it is intended to convey. The general meaning of the expression is plain. The appellation describes Christians as brought by divine agency from a very miserable into a very desirable state. But to ascertain the nature of the wretchedness of the one state and the happiness of the other, it is requisite that we know something as to the darkness to which the one, and the light to which the other, is compared.

It has been supposed by some, that the figure here is that which is employed by the Psalmist to describe one class of the deliverances which the redeemed of the Lord are called on to acknowledge as a proof that he is good, that his mercy endureth for ever: deliverance from the darkness of a dungeon, and restoration to the healthful air and the blessed light of heaven.¹ And thus considered, it would afford a very instructive view of the state of Christians, both before and after their believing on, coming to, building on Christ.

I cannot help thinking, however, that, as in all the other descriptive designations of Christians in this beautiful passage there is a reference to something in the history or situation of the ancient people of God, the figure here, too, is drawn from the same prolific source of illustrations of Christian truth. I apprehend it refers to the remarkable event—their deliverance from Egypt—which led to their

¹ Ps. cvii. 10-14.

becoming the select race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people. God "called Israel out of Egypt,"¹ and called them out of Egypt to make them a peculiar people to himself. But how should the call out of Egypt be represented as a call "out of darkness into light," "God's light," "God's marvellous light?" A slight attention to the circumstances of the deliverance from Egypt will enable us to answer this question.

Egypt was enveloped in midnight darkness, made tenfold more terrible by the last and severest of all its plagues, the death of the first-born of man and beast, when Israel was called by God to leave that scene of his degradation and suffering. On the evening of the tenth day of the month Abib, the Israelites having by divine command made preparations for departure, in each of their families slew a lamb, and sprinkled its blood on the posts and lintels of the doors of their dwellings. They hastily ate the roasted lamb, with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands. At the dark hour of midnight the destroying angel accomplished at one stroke his awful work. "From the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne, unto the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon," all—all became his victims. Nor was even the brute creation exempted from the general plague. "There was a great cry in Egypt;" for there was not a house, except the blood-sprinkled habitations of Israel, where there was not one dead. It was the voice of Jehovah, though uttered by the mouth of Pharaoh, that proclaimed, amid the darkness and death of that night, "Rise up, and get you forth!" From amidst this fearful darkness, meet emblem of the miseries they had endured, "Jehovah called his people."²

And as he "called them out of darkness," so he "called them into his marvellous light." That was a night much

¹ Hos. xi. 11.

² Ex. xii. *passim*.

to be remembered; for when God called his people from Egypt, "he went before them by night as a pillar of fire, to give them light, to lead them in the way." Thus "he sent darkness, and made it dark. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of their strength. He brought forth his people with silver and gold. Egypt was glad when they departed. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night."¹ Thus did God call his ancient people "out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Such, we apprehend, is the figure: now for its interpretation. What is the darkness out of which the spiritual Israel is delivered? What the marvellous light into the midst of which they are brought to dwell? It has often been said that the one is the emblem of the absolute darkness of heathenism, or the comparative darkness of Judaism, and the other of the pure light of the gospel dispensation. There can be no doubt that the persons directly addressed were delivered out of the former, and were introduced into the latter; but we mistake much, if both the darkness and the light here be not rather subjective than objective, rather that which reigns within than that which prevails without. Like the parallel expression, "Once were ye darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," the expression in the text refers to the darkness of the unregenerate state, and the light of the renewed mind. It describes what the New Testament represents as so important, "repentance towards God," a change of mind.²

The darkness out of which Christians are brought at their conversion, is a state in which the sun of the intelligent world, God, who is "light, and in whom there is no darkness at all," "the Father of lights," the Author of true knowledge, holiness, and happiness, does not shine; in other

¹ Ps. cv. 28, 36-39.

² Eph. v. 8; Acts xx. 21.

words, where ignorance and error with regard to God, and therefore with regard to everything of importance in a religious and moral point of view, prevail; and in which, of consequence, there is, there can be, no true holiness; in which there is, and must be, depravity; and in which, in consequence of this error, and ignorance, and depravity, there is, there can be, no true solid happiness; where there is, and must be, *misery*, in the highest sense in which that word can be applied to a being like man. This is the darkness in which Christians, in common with the rest of the race, are naturally involved; and this is the darkness out of which they are called by God. There is the less necessity for our dwelling on this part of the subject, as I have already had occasion, when describing the various aspects of the state of Christians, previously to their connection with Christ, exhibited in the text, to illustrate their state of moral darkness, in its threefold phases of ignorance, depravity, and misery.¹

Let us rather turn our attention to the more grateful object of contemplation, that state of light, divine light, marvellous divine light, into which Christians are called by God: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus," is made to "shine in the heart;"² that is, in plain words, the individual, by being brought, under divine influence, to understand and believe the revelation of the holy and benignant character of God, made in that gospel which contains an account of the person and work of Him, the only-begotten of God, who is the revealer of the Father, attains just views of God, which necessarily lead to just views on all other subjects specially interesting to man as a religious and moral being. He no longer "walks in darkness, but has the light of life." He knows and is sure "that God is, and that he is the rewarder

¹ *Vide* Part I. sec. 2.

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

of them who diligently seek him." He knows and is sure that he is "glorious in holiness," and "rich in mercy;" that he is "the just God and the Saviour,"—"just, and the justifier of the ungodly believing in Jesus,"—"God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing he has made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He "knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."¹ And this glorious light dispels the surrounding darkness, it corrects a thousand mistakes, clears up a thousand difficulties; as the sun not only enables us to see itself, but everything else.

This light of knowledge is also the light of purity. It is a light which has heat with it, producing the blossoms of holy affection, the fruits of holy conduct. When God is truly known, sanctifying virtue comes forth from him. The love of God, the seminal principle, the concentrated essence of holiness in intelligent creatures, is the natural result of this knowledge of God. What is the knowledge we have been describing, but such an apprehension of the divine mind and will as makes it our mind and will? and what is this but holiness, for what is holiness in an intelligent creature but conformity of mind and will to the Holy, Holy, Holy One? This is very beautifully illustrated by the apostle: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light; for the fruit of the light (for such is the true reading)—the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."² In another passage, he employs another and still more striking image: We all, with unveiled faces, like

¹ John viii. 12; Heb. xi. 6; Ex. xv. 11; Eph. ii. 4; Isa. xlv. 21; Rom. iii. 26; 2 Cor. v. 19-21; John xvii. 3.

² Eph. v. 8. *Ὡς τίνος φωτός περιπατοῦντες ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτός* (not *πλούματες*, as in the *textus receptus*) *ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθότητι, κ. τ. λ.*

mirrors, exposed to the glory of the Lord, are made glorious by that which is glorious, the glory of God in the face of his Son; we reflect his light, and thus ourselves become luminous. Through his shining on us, we ourselves shine.¹

This light is productive of rational joy, permanent happiness, as well as of knowledge and of holiness. The truth respecting the divine character cannot be known by man without producing happiness: "It is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." "Blessed are the people who know that joyful sound." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth go before thy face. Blessed are the people who know this joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." All the holy affections which naturally grow out of the knowledge and faith of the truth, are so many wells of living water springing up to eternal life. "Light is sown"—shed forth, its rays scattered, like the seed from the hand of the sower—"on the righteous, and gladness on the upright in heart."² To love God, to fear God, to trust in God, are most delightful exercises.

Such is, I apprehend, in its great leading lineaments, that state of light into which Christians are called by God,—a state of knowledge, holiness, and happiness. This light is not perfect in this present world, but it is real, and it is progressive and inextinguishable. It is not like "the light of the wicked," the blaze of thorns, or the deceitful wild-fire, which "shall be darkened;" it is like "the shining light," the sun in the heavens, "which shines more and more unto the perfect day."³ As the pious Archbishop says, "There is a bright morning, without cloud, which

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

² John xvii. 3; Ps. lxxxix. 14-16, xcvii. 7.

³ Job xviii. 5; Prov. iv. 18.

will arise. The saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, an inheritance in light. The land where their inheritance lieth is full of light, and their inheritance itself is light. The vision of God, the seeing him as he is, and the being like him, in consequence of seeing him as he is; that inheritance, the celestial city, has no need of the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light of it. That uncreated light is the happiness of our soul; the beginnings of it are our begun happiness. They are beams of it sent from above to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. 'With thee,' says David, 'is the fountain of life; and in thy light shall we see light.'"¹

This "light," this state of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, into which Christians are called, is termed "God's light." "Called out of darkness into his light." It is his, for he is its author. He is "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift."² This is not a light produced by a fire of man's own kindling. It is not knowledge, moral improvement, and happiness, obtained by the exercise of his natural faculties of intelligence and action. It is the work, it is the gift of God. "It is God the Lord who hath showed us light," and who, too, hath opened our blind eyes, to "give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son."³ HE did the great works in which his holiness and grace were made known; HE made the revelation in which these glorious deeds are recorded; HE opens the understanding to understand this revelation; and HE opens the heart to love it, so that we are enlightened, and purified, and blessed by it. It is thus HIS, as he is the author of it; and it is HIS, too, as he is the subject of it. Yes, God is "all in all" of this light. It is God known that makes us wise;

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 9.² James i. 17.³ Ps. cxviii. 27; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

God conformed to that makes us holy ; God enjoyed that makes us happy. Jehovah is the light of his people, not only the author, but the essence of their happiness.

This light, this state of knowledge, purity, and happiness, is also termed marvellous,—“God’s marvellous,” strange, wonderful, “light.” The light which emblemized it, the pillar of fire, was a marvellous light. It was supernatural, and so is this light. “It is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous” in the eyes of all who behold it. It produces marvellous effects, enabling us to see things invisible and eternal ; and by its brightness, casting into the shade things seen and temporal, it enables us to “see the King in his beauty, and to behold the land which is afar off.”¹ It enables us to penetrate into the true characters of objects, and to distinguish shadows from realities, and realities from shadows. It converts a spiritual waste into the garden of the Lord, blooming with beauty, rich in the fruits of righteousness :

“Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk’d before.
The soul—a dreary province once
Of Satan’s dark domain—
Feels a new empire form’d within,
And owns a heavenly reign.”

(9.) *Christians are “the people of God.”*

The next appellation to which our attention must be turned is, “The people of God.” “Who were not a people,” but now are “the people of God.” In these words there is an obvious reference to the following remarkable passages in the book of the prophet Hosea : “In the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be

¹ Ps. cxviii. 23 ; Isa. xxxiii. 17.

said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." "I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy ; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people ; and they shall say, Thou art my God."¹ These words, as they occur in the Old Testament Scriptures, plainly refer to the ten tribes, who, in consequence of their idolatries, were to be delivered up to a long captivity ; and not only deprived of all external marks of the divine peculiar favour, but visited with very distinct evidences of the divine judicial displeasure : driven from their own land ; "abiding for many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." At a period, which we believe still to be future, these outcasts are to "return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king ; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."² Then they who have long not been a people, but a collection of wanderers among the nations, shall become, and be made to appear to be, as a nation, the peculiar objects of the divine favour, the people of the Lord.

The general meaning of the statement in the text is, that the previous state of Christians resembled that of the outcast remnant of Israel—that they were not a people ; and that their present state embraces in it all the dignities and advantages of which the dignities and advantages of Israel, the ancient people of God, were a type and emblem. Previously to their coming to Christ, they were "not a people." It is not as bodies of men, still less as political bodies of men, but as individuals, that men are made Christians. There is no such thing as wholesale conversions. It is seldom that a whole family is converted at once ; and even when this takes place, as in the case of the family of the jailer of Philippi, they are converted as individuals ;

¹ Hos. i. 10, ii. 23.

² Hos. iii. 4, 5.

and when "a nation shall be born at once,"¹ as we hope and believe shall one day happen, even then the change will be a personal change in every individual. They who form the true Church of God were previously "not a people;" they were unconverted individuals; "one of a city, two of a family."² God does not take the inhabitants of the Roman empire and constitute them his church. He "takes out of the Gentiles a people for his name." His church is a body formed of individuals "redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and people, and nation."³

But though they were previously not a people, but a set of unconnected individuals, generally no way distinguished for their worldly respectability, for the most part belonging to the lower classes, "the foolish," the "despised," the "weak," the "base things of the world;"⁴ yet now they are not only a people, a regularly organized body, but the "people of God." The "people of God" is here, I apprehend, just another term for "the spiritual Israel," "the true circumcision." You are the people of God, is equivalent to, You are not only a society, but the most illustrious of all societies; having Jehovah for your king; standing to him in a peculiar relation, suited to the genius of the new, and spiritual, and heavenly economy, analogous to that in which Israel stood to him under the former external and temporary dispensation. You have the substance of all the typical and emblematical privileges which Israel, the people of God under that order of things, enjoyed. Of these the apostle gives a comprehensive catalogue: "To them pertained the adoption," or the sonship, "and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came."⁵

¹ Acts xvi. 34; Isa. lxvi. 8.

² Jer. iii. 14.

³ Acts xv. 14; Rev. xiv. 4, vii. 9.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 26-29.

⁵ Rom. ix. 4.

Now, to Christians pertain a higher species of divine sonship than ever did, than ever could, belong to Israel according to the flesh,—a nearer relation, a spiritual conformity; higher honours; a more valuable and enduring inheritance. Instead of the Shekinah, or visible glory, they have the manifestation of God in the person and work of his Son, contained in his word, and rendered influential by his Spirit, to guard them from danger, and guide them through the perplexities of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan. Instead of the external covenants, they have that covenant which refers to “the sure mercies of” the mystical “David;” “the covenant well ordered and sure,”¹ which secures not the possession of Canaan for many ages, but the enjoyment of heaven for ever. Instead of “the law which was given by Moses,” and which, in the existing state of the world, was a “grace,” a privilege, the value of which could not easily be estimated, they have what is a far more precious favour, “the grace and the truth which came by Jesus Christ.”²

Instead of the imposing solemnities of legal worship, they have the simple and spiritual institutions of the gospel of Christ. Instead of the promises of the earthly Canaan and temporal prosperity, they have “the exceeding great and precious promises” of “spiritual and heavenly blessings,” and which “are all yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by them,”³ and shall all be completely fulfilled in the Canaan above. They are “Abraham’s seed, according to the promise;” “walking in the steps of his faith,” and blessed with the highest blessing he enjoyed—justification by believing.⁴ And they are connected with the Messiah by a relation far more intimate in its nature,

¹ Isa. lv. 3; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

² John i. 17.

³ 2 Pet. i. 4; Eph. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 20.

⁴ Gal. iii. 29; Rom. iv. 12; Gal. iii. 14.

far more important in its results, than that which distinguished the Israelites as his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" said the Messiah: "whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."¹ They are connected with him by a relation more intimate in its nature, and more blissful in its effects, than that which bound to him, as mother, the most blessed and honoured of women. "Blessed," said a woman from the midst of a crowd, with which on one occasion he was surrounded, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked." "Yea, rather," said he in reply, "Yea, rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and do it."² Thus have true Christians, "who were not a people," become "the people of God," the spiritual Israel, the true circumcision.

(10.) *Christians "have obtained mercy."*

The only remaining designation of Christians, indicative of their having tasted that the Lord is gracious, that still requires illustration, is, that once they "had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The language here, as in the case of the former designation, "who were not a people, but are now the people of God," is borrowed from a statement originally made with reference to the ten tribes, a promise of their restoration from their long captivity: "I will have mercy upon her who had not obtained mercy."³ The ten tribes, even in the period of their abandonment by God, are the objects of his peculiar care. They are "beloved for the fathers' sakes."⁴ Yet still there is a sense, and an important one, in which, while in this state, they do "not obtain mercy." They are destitute of all clear mani-

¹ Matt. xii. 48, 50.

² Luke xi. 27, 28.

³ Hos. ii. 23.

⁴ Rom. xi. 28.

festations of divine peculiar regard towards them, and are, indeed, plainly marked as objects of the divine judicial displeasure. But at the time of their restoration they shall find mercy. They shall obtain very palpable manifestations of the divine peculiar favour. "I will make a covenant for them," says Jehovah, "with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground : and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth," or the land, "and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth them to me for ever ; yea, I will betroth them to me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies : I will even betroth them to me in faithfulness ; and they shall know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord : I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her to me in the earth ; and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy."¹

The general truth, with respect to Christians, indicated by the language borrowed from the divine dispensations to the ten tribes, is this : That from a state in which they were the objects of the divine judicial displeasure and moral disapprobation, they are brought into a state in which they enjoy the most abundant evidence of his peculiar favour and complacential delight. In their original state, as fallen creatures, ignorant, in error, guilty, depraved, they "had not obtained mercy." God pitied them, and gave them many proofs of his forbearance, and patience, and providential munificence. Nay, more than this, God was determined to save them : they were the objects of his eternal, electing, sovereign love. But they were not, they could not be, the objects either of his judicial approbation

¹ Hos. ii. 18-23.

or of his complacential delight. Oh no ! they were "condemned already;" they were "children of wrath, even as others." They were "wicked," and as wicked "God was angry with them every day;"—"enemies of God" by ignorance of mind, alienation of heart, and wicked works;¹ objects of his holy displeasure and righteous condemnatory sentences; hopelessly, because wilfully, enslaved to Satan and to sin; mortal, with nothing to sweeten the bitterness of death, or lighten the darkness of the grave; immortal, yet destitute of all prospect of an eternity of blessedness. Such was their situation, in common with every individual of the fallen race to which they belong. Above them was an angry Divinity; around them were the instruments of his vengeance; and beneath them was the pit of perdition yawning wide to receive them. They "had not obtained mercy."

Such were they once; but what are they now? They "have obtained mercy." In consequence of believing in Christ, coming to him, they have received in rich abundance manifestations of the divine saving grace, of God's distinguishing mercy. "In Christ they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of divine grace." God is "merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities he remembers no more." They are "made accepted in the Beloved;" and "in him they obtain an everlasting inheritance." "Justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also they have access by faith into this grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,"—a hope that shall never make them ashamed. And "not only so, but they joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation." "Created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, loves

¹ John iii. 18; Eph. ii. 3; Ps. vii. 11; Col. i. 21; Eph. iv. 18.

them, and blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." They are "made partakers of a divine nature," and "the Spirit of glory and of God rests on them," and dwells in them. "They are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ Jesus." God "makes all things to work together for their good." "None can separate them from the love of God." "None can pluck them out of his hand." "Now are they the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what they shall be: but when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory; and they shall be like him, seeing him as he is." "Goodness and mercy follow them all their days." "All the ways of the Lord to them," even the most perplexing and mysterious, "are mercy and truth to them;" "they shall find mercy of him on that day;" and throughout eternity shall find how true is that declaration so often repeated in Scripture, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."¹ Thus have we completed our illustration of the third great branch of our subject: the numerous and varied dignities and blessings enjoyed by Christians, in consequence of their connection with Christ, viewed as manifestations of the Lord's graciousness to them.

And here let us pause and inquire, whether we have satisfactory evidence that we are personally interested in these exceeding great and precious privileges; that we, as the elect race, the holy nation, the peculiar people, have been effectually called out of darkness into God's marvellous light; that we, from being aliens and outcasts, have really been admitted among the people of God; that we, who were once objects of the divine judicial displeasure

¹ Eph. i. 3, 7, 8, 11; Heb. viii. 12; Rom. v. 1-11; Eph. ii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 4; 1 Pet. iv. 14; Rom. viii. 17, 28, 35-39; John x. 28, 29; 1 John iii. 1-3; Ps. xxiii. 6, xxv. 10; 2 Tim. i. 18; Ps. cxxxvi. *passim*.

and moral disapprobation, have now obtained mercy? The characteristic marks of a state of unregeneracy and of a state of regeneracy are so palpable, that no man needs, no man can, without the grossest inattention, remain ignorant of which of these is his own state.

Let those who have good ground to conclude that the great change has taken place in their case, that they have been turned from darkness to light, that they are a portion of that people which God has taken from among the Gentiles to himself, that they are the recipients of those saving blessings which are the manifestation of the love which God has to his own, cherish a grateful sense of the divine, sovereign kindness. Let them never forget, that it is all grace and mercy, sovereign grace, unmerited mercy. Not to them, not to them, but to Him who loved them because he wills to love them, be all the glory. Let them walk like the children of the light and of the day. Let them make their light shine before men. Let them prove that they are the people of God, by being "zealous of good works," by coming out from among the wicked world, and being separate, not touching the unclean thing. Let them show that they are indeed the recipients of divine mercy, by manifesting the effects which the reception of saving benefits uniformly has on the temper and conduct. Let the grace of God, enjoyed by them, teach them to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" while they look for, haste to, "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And O! let those who, if they think at all, must know that they are in the darkness of ignorance and sin, that they are not among the peculiar people, that they have not

obtained mercy, consider what the end must be if they continue in their present condition. Pass that boundary which separates time from eternity,—and you know that boundary must be passed soon by all of you, how soon, how suddenly, you do not, you cannot know,—pass that boundary, and the darkness of a natural state will settle down into the blackness of darkness for ever; they who are not God's people, never can become God's people; those who have not obtained mercy, never can obtain mercy. The change so absolutely necessary to your happiness, must take place in time, it cannot take place in eternity; it must take place on earth, it cannot take place in hell. Have you made up your mind that it is never to take place? If you have not, why should it not take place now? Till this change take place, you cannot be secure or happy. Can you be safe and happy too soon? All who are dwelling amid the glorious light of God, were once, like you, in darkness. Those who are God's people were once not his people. Those who have obtained mercy, had not obtained mercy. The grace which saved them is able to save you; is willing, is ready, to save you. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" The light shines around you. Why shut your eyes to it? The door of admission to the fellowship of God's people stands open. Why will ye not enter in? The blessings of divine mercy are held out to you. Why turn away from the proffered treasure, which gladly, gratefully received, would make you rich toward God, rich for ever? Why madly strike back the hand which is stretched out to rescue you from destruction? Now, "now is the accepted time." Yet a little while, and the voice of invitation and warning will sink into silence; and instead of it, be heard the voice of generous regret, "Oh that they had known!" They might, they would not, they shall not. No. No more for ever!

IV. THE MISERY AND RUIN OF THOSE WHO, BY REFUSING
TO "COME TO CHRIST," REMAIN DESTITUTE OF THESE
PRIVILEGES.

The only other branch of the subject which remains to be considered, is the misery and ruin of those who persist in unbelief and disobedience, rejecting Christ as the divinely laid foundation, viewed as an illustration by contrast of the graciousness of the Lord to those who believe in, come to, and build on Jesus Christ as the foundation. This is stated in the following words, in the 7th and 8th verses: "To them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

The language is elliptical, and the manner in which the ellipsis is to be supplied, depends on the manner in which you translate and explain the clause which immediately precedes, rendered in our version, "he is precious." "To you who believe, he," that is, Jesus Christ, "is precious;" He is highly valued by you. Supposing this to be the true rendering, the ellipsis must be thus supplied: 'To them who are disobedient, he is contemptible; by them he is undervalued and despised;' and what follows should be the illustration of this. I have already stated to you the reason why I cannot consider these words, "To you who believe, he is precious"—though embodying in them a truth very dear to the heart of every Christian, expressed in words very delightful to the ears of every Christian—as giving the meaning of the inspired writer. They are not the natural meaning of the original words. The statement they contain does not well accord either with what goes

before or with what follows them. It is plainly a conclusion or inference from the prophet's declaration, "He who believeth" on Christ, as the foundation, "shall not be ashamed." Now, that Christ is precious to believers, is no inference from this declaration; and the words that follow are plainly meant to be a contrast. But what contrast is there between these statements? Christ, as the foundation, is precious to believers; but unbelievers stumble over him so as to fall, and to be broken, and perish. The natural contrast is, Christ is precious to believers: he is little prized by unbelievers.

On the supposition that the true rendering of the words is, "to you who believe there is honour,"—a rendering warranted, if not absolutely required, by the original terms, and giving exactly the inference warranted by the prophet's declaration, "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded;" "to you, then, that believe, there is, according to the prophet's declaration, not shame, but honour;"—on the supposition that this is the true rendering, the ellipsis must be thus supplied, 'To you, then, who believe, there is honour; but to those who are disobedient, there is shame.' What follows is the illustration of this. The stone which they, like the builders, "disallowed," is, in spite of their disallowance, "made the head stone of the corner." This must cover them with shame and confusion. Nor is this all: they stumble over the stone which they refuse to build on, and are, in consequence, broken in pieces.

There is a reference here to two passages of Old Testament prediction: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner." "And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and snared,

and taken.”¹ The figure seems to be this: ‘You, the unbelieving and disobedient, rejected the stone laid by God in Zion, and would not build on it; yet, in spite of your rejection, this stone is made the head stone, that is, the chief stone, of the corner; and multitudes build on it, and grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.’ The word “head stone” does not refer to its being the topmost, but the principal stone of the corner. Indeed, it seems plain, the stone referred to is a foundation stone, not a cope stone; and this explains what follows. Not only shall the stone you reject be made the chief stone of the corner; but as foundation corner-stones often projected from the building, it shall become to you “a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence,”—two expressions of exactly parallel meaning: a stone, a rock, over which you shall stumble so as to be greatly injured, indeed destroyed; stumble so, to use the prophet’s words, as to “fall, and be broken.”

The words “whereunto also they were appointed,” which have occasioned much controversy among critics and commentators, refer to the word “stumble,” not to the word “disobedient.”² The reference would have been more obvious had it been rendered, “who, being disobedient, stumble at the word,” or rather, “who, being disobedient to the word, stumble.” Stumbling is at once the consequence and the punishment of unbelief and disobedience. Sin is never represented as appointed by God; punishment is. God permits men to be sinners—that is, he does not hinder them from sinning; he appoints them, if they sin, to be punished. The reference here, however, does not seem to be to the divine decree, so much as to the revelation of the divine decree in the divine prediction. The apostle refers to the passage quoted, and his words are equivalent to,—‘to which stumbling, it appears, from the saying of

¹ Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. viii. 14, etc.

² See Note C.

the prophet, those who are disobedient are appointed.' God has connected this stumbling with unbelief as its natural effect, and in his word has said so.

The word rendered "disobedient"¹ signifies unbelieving as well as disobedient, intimating to us the important truth, that faith and obedience, and unbelief and disobedience, are indissolubly connected; unbelief being disobedience to the great commandment, and the root of disobedience to all the commandments. The unbelieving and disobedient are represented as discrediting and disobeying the gospel revelation; but there seems to be a peculiar reference to "the word,"² or discourse, the prophetic declaration which the inspired writer is immediately referring to.³ The direct reference in the term disobedient is, no doubt, to the unbelieving Jews. When God proclaimed to them, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste,"—they disbelieved the declaration. They disobeyed the command. They rejected the stone. They would not build on it. They would not receive Jesus as the Messiah; on the contrary, they "took him, and with wicked hands they crucified and slew him."

But what was the consequence? Was the stone laid by Jehovah in Zion prevented from becoming the great foundation it was intended for, "the chief stone of the corner?" Oh no: hear what Peter said on a memorable occasion, and what I have little doubt was in his mind when he wrote the passage now before us: "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, God raised from the dead. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become

¹ Ἀπειθεῖς.

² Τῆς λέγης ἀπειθεῖναι. The exegesis which would explain the term λόγος of the personal Word, is harsh and unnatural.

³ Isa. xxviii. 16.

the head of the corner.”¹ Disappointment and shame were their portion. In all their attempts to prevent the foundation being securely laid in its place, they had been furthering it; and when “they gathered together against the Lord and his Christ,” they had done but “what his hand and counsel aforetime determined to be done.”²

But this disappointment was not their only punishment. “The stone laid in Zion,” which they rejected, on which they would not build, “was to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” Their opposition to the declared purpose of God brought on them severe inflictions of the divine wrath. “Wrath to the uttermost,” as the apostle speaks, “came on them.” They “fell, and were broken.” The awful prediction in the book of the prophet Isaiah, connected with the passage quoted, was fulfilled: “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.”³

These awful predictions found their accomplishment in the siege and sack of Jerusalem, in the destruction of the temple, the dissolution of the polity, the dispersion of the nation of the Jews. To these unbelieving, these disobedient ones, in consequence of their unbelief, their not coming to Christ, their not believing in him, there was not honour, but shame; they were confounded. Their emblem is not the temple, to whose stately buildings our Lord directed the

¹ Acts iv. 10, 11.

² Acts iv. 27, 28.

³ Isa. xxviii. 17-21.

attention of his disciples, but its scattered ruins, when one stone was not to be found upon another. Instead of "the chosen generation," they became "a rejected race." Instead of being a "royal priesthood," Jehovah proclaimed to them, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck. Bring no more vain oblations." Instead of being a holy nation, they left "their name as a curse to God's chosen; for the Lord God slew them, and called his people by another name."¹ Instead of being called out of darkness into God's glorious light, their light was turned into darkness; they were "cast into outer darkness."² They who were the people of God were no more the people of God, not even a people; they who had found mercy, no longer obtained mercy; "they were a people of no understanding! therefore he that made them would not have mercy on them, and he that formed them would show them no favour."³ Their privileges were taken from them, and heavy judgments inflicted on them.

While I cannot doubt that the primary reference of these words is to the unbelieving Jews, both as individuals and as a nation in the primitive ages, it is plain that the statement here is substantially true of all who are unbelieving and disobedient, of every country and in every age. All who, being "disobedient to the word," "disallow the stone laid in Zion," must be disappointed. "He must reign."⁴ It is easier to pull the sun from the firmament, than to remove the Saviour from his throne; easier to arrest the course of that sun, than to stop the progress of his gospel. Those who reject him show their wish that all should reject him, and that his religion should be extinguished; and sometimes they are mad enough to think, as the Jews no doubt did, when they had brought him to the cross and laid him in

¹ Isa. lxvi. 3, lxv. 15.

² Matt. viii. 12.

³ Isa. xxvii. 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

the grave, that they shall be successful. Voltaire proudly boasted, that one wise man would undo what twelve fools had done. Hume said, that Christianity could not survive the nineteenth century; and in the insane impieties of revolutionized France, many of their disciples fancied they saw the token of the accomplishment of these anticipations.

“Fond impious man! thinkst thou yon sanguine cloud
Rais'd by thy breath has quench'd the orb of day?
To-morrow He repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.”¹

Oh, how will confusion of face cover all unbelievers, when, on the great day, they find him whom they rejected on the throne of universal judgment, and themselves trembling before his tribunal! Their miscalculations will make them the objects of “shame and contempt” to the whole intelligent creation of God to all eternity.

But this is not all. They shall stumble so as to fall—fall into hell. It is a serious matter to reject the Saviour. He is the only Saviour. “There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” He who will not be saved by him cannot be saved at all. He who rejects his sacrifice must bear the weight of unexpiated sin for ever. There remaineth for such, nothing but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to destroy them as the adversaries of God.”²

To many “this is a hard saying,” and they refuse to hear it. They cannot think that there is such a difference, in a moral point of view, between faith and unbelief, that their consequences should be more distant from each other than the poles of the earth, as distant as the heights of heaven are from the depths of hell. But steadily look at this unbelief, and you will cease to wonder. What is it

¹ Gray.

² Acts iv. 12; Heb. x. 26, 27.

but to trample at once on all that is great, and all that is gracious, in the divine character ; to call the God of truth a liar, and the God of wisdom a fool ; to despise his proffered gifts, and defy his threatened vengeance ? If there be power in the arm of omnipotent justice, against whom can it be more worthily put forth than against the impenitent unbeliever ? And, let it never be forgotten, the unbeliever is the destroyer of his own soul. He refuses to build on the foundation Jehovah has laid. This is folly and sin enough. But this is not all : he madly dashes himself against the chief foundation corner-stone, and breaks himself in pieces.

Oh, how different the state of the believer and the unbeliever ! how happy the one, how miserable the other ! Look at the two, and say if he who has secured the former has not reason to say, that the Lord has been gracious to *him* ; for there was no alternative. If he had not obtained the honour and happiness of the believer, the shame and ruin of the unbeliever must have been his. And then let him further think, Who made him to differ ? ‘ I was an unbeliever and a disobedient one, and, left to myself, I should have been an unbeliever and disobedient one still. In that state I should have lived and died, and entered into eternity. What has made me to differ ? Sovereign kindness. Whence came my faith, and all its blessed consequences, in time and in eternity ? It is not of myself, “ it is the gift of God.” It was given me “ on behalf of Christ to believe on his name.” Surely, surely the Lord has been gracious to *me*.’

I have thus brought before your minds the four great sources of illustrative proof, that the Lord is gracious to Christians. Their natural condition, the manner in which that condition was changed, the blessings of their new condition, and the final state of those who obstinately continue

in their natural condition; all these, rightly considered, are fitted to deepen this conviction on a Christian's mind—"Verily the Lord is gracious, and I have tasted of his grace."

It is of importance to inquire, What is the practical end which the apostle seeks to gain by pressing on the attention of Christians these proofs that the Lord is gracious? That end is easily discovered. This was his wish, as it was his Master's will, even their sanctification; and he was fully persuaded that men will never be holy, but in the degree in which they believe that God is good, good to them. "When the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that we, being justified by his grace, might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who believe in God may be careful to maintain good works."¹

The Apostle Peter does not leave us to find out his object by such a reference as we have now made to general principles. He distinctly shows us why he appeals to the graciousness of the Lord: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently. Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings;" "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" "*Seeing* ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He plainly acts on the same principle as his beloved brother Paul, when he says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God,"—manifested in the divine

¹ Tit. iii. 4-8.

method of justification,—“I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, by Christ Jesus, which is your rational service” as spiritual priests; “and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.”¹

I cannot conclude these illustrations without dropping a word of warning to those to whom this word of salvation has come, but as yet come in vain; to whom God has long been proclaiming, “Behold, I have laid in Zion as a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation,” but who, instead of believing on it, coming to it, building on it, have been, like the Jewish builders, rejecting it, disallowing it. Your situation, “men and brethren,” is awfully perilous. If you will not build on that stone, you must stumble over it, and fall, and be broken. As to present privileges, you are in far better circumstances than the heathen, who never heard of the way of salvation; but as to future destiny, if you do not enter on the way of salvation opened before you, you shall be in far worse circumstances than they. Yes, in the day of judgment, “it shall be more tolerable for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you.” All the happiness of the highest heavens is freely offered you, if you will accept of it in the only way God can give it, or you receive it; but if you contemptuously put it away from you, you not only must lose it, but you must sink yourselves into the very lowest depths of hopeless misery.

If you perish—and you cannot perish but by your own obstinate refusal of a salvation, ready to be bestowed on you if you will but accept of it—your perdition will be no

¹ Rom. xii. 1, 3.

ordinary perdition. The awful declarations of the Apocalypse will be realized in your experience: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."¹

But oh! why should it be so? God has no "pleasure in your death;" he swears by his life that he has not. He wills you to turn from your evil ways, and live. If you perish, you must be self-destroyers. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Be no longer disobedient to the word of mercy. Receive it gladly, gratefully; and in receiving it, you will receive the Saviour and his salvation. The feast of gospel grace is set before you, and urged on your acceptance: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." May the good Spirit render effectual the invitation of the word, and induce you all to take of the bread and the water of life freely, that, eating and drinking, you may live for ever.

NOTE A. p. 255.

For the following notes on these two passages by J. D. Michaelis, I am indebted to Dr Pye Smith: *Four Sermons*, pp. 150-152.—Ps. cxviii. 22. "I understand this literally. It appears that probably at the building of Solomon's temple, one of those stones which David had taken care to get provided, and made ready for use, was found fault with by the builders, and declared to be useless; and that God, for altogether different reasons, commanded, by a prophet, that this stone should be made the corner-stone. The Orientals regard the corner-stone

¹ Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

as the one peculiarly holy stone in a temple, and that it confers sanctity on the whole edifice. It is therefore the more probable, that either by the Urim and Thummim (the sacred lot of the Jews), or by a prophet, God was consulted what stone he would direct to be taken for the corner-stone. The answer was, That which they had perseveringly rejected and declared to be quite unserviceable. Certainly it must have been for a very important reason that God positively appointed this stone to be the corner-stone. But the New Testament discloses it to us in Matt. xxi. 42 and 1 Pet. ii. 7. The Jewish nation would conduct themselves towards the Messiah precisely as the builders did towards this stone, and would reject him; but God would select him to be the corner-stone, which should support and sanctify the whole Church.—Isa. viii. 14: *“For he will be a holy stone for refuge, and a stone of stumbling over and falling to both the nations of Israel.”* ‘Holy stone,’ literally a sanctuary; but under this expression denoting an object over which persons may stumble and fall, a temple cannot be understood. The following connection shows that a *holy stone* is intended. Such sacred stones were very frequent among the Eastern nations of antiquity. Jacob, for instance, erected one, Gen. xxviii. 18. These holy or consecrated stones were also usually employed for the corner-stones of temples. Sanctuaries, or holy places, temples, altars, and holy stones, possessed the right of an inviolable asylum, and persons fled to them even in war, for security from being put to death. In this passage God (the Lord, the Messiah) is represented as a holy stone, to which those who trust in him flee, and through whom they are safe; but he who desponds, and puts not his confidence in him, is compared to a person full of terror, who runs blindly forward, sees not the stone that lies in his way, falls over it, and is severely hurt.”—*Michaelis, Uebersetz. u. Anmerk.* Dr Smith most justly remarks, that we are not to form our ideas of the *corner-stone* from modern or classical architecture. We are to imagine a massive stone, like one of those at Stonehenge, laid in the building, so that its two sides, forming the right angle, should lie along the two walls, thus binding them together in such a way that neither weather nor force could dis sever them.—*אֶלֶּשׁ פִּנֵּה* does not necessarily signify the top stone; it merely indicates a chief stone.

NOTE B. p. 255.

"Saxo quod adhuc vivum radice tenetur."—OVID. Met. xiv. 714. — "vivoque sedilia saxo."—VIRG. Æn. i. 171. ALEX. MORUS' note is curious:—"Apud Ethnicos quoque lapidum vivorum reperies mentionem, λίθους ἐμφύλους. Plutarchus de fluminibus non semel vocat lapides vivos, inter quos θρασύδειλον Eurotæ proprium lapidem nominat, qui, tuba sonante, prosiliebat, ad ripam scilicet; Atheniensium autem audito nomine, mergebatur in profundum. Nec minus fabulosa quæ Suidas habet de Heraisco Ægyptio Philosopho qui rite dignoscere calleret ἀγάλλματα τὰ ζῶντα, καὶ μὴ ζῶντα vel ἄψυχα καὶ ἄμοιρα θείας ἐπιπνοίας. Contra Petrus fideles vere lapides vivos vere spirantes ac loquentes, Dei statuas spirituales et participes θείας ἐπιπνοίας hic dixit."—*Notes ad quædam loca N. F.* p. 210.

NOTE C. p. 344.

"Προσκόπτουσι. Ἀπειθοῦντες. Horum autem verborum prius designat proprie *pœnam*, posterius *culpam*; pronomen autem *ad quod* refertur ad prius, non ad posterius. Improbos destinavit Deus ad pœnam, non ad culpam."—CAPPELLUS. "Προσκόπτουσι—Ἀπειθοῦντες:" the former of these words designates punishment; the latter, sin. The pronoun *οἱ*—*οἱ* refers to the former, not to the latter. God appoints the wicked to punishment, not to sin. Some anti-Calvinists have found in these words a proof, that even they who perish through unbelief were appointed to salvation. They refer *οἱ*, in the teeth of grammar, to λόγος; and try to bring out, or rather put in, the sense, to use the words of one of them, a very worthy Lutheran, HEMMINGIUS: "Etsi illis destinata erat salutis promissio, tamen non crediderunt." It is sad when the love of system leads good men thus to "pervert" the word of God. "Mens Petri est: Hoc infidelium præsertim Judæorum scandalum et πρόσκομμα, ad Christum lapidem angularem dudum a prophetis, Christo, aliisque assertum et prædictum esse."—Jer. viii. 14, 15; Matt. xxi. 42, 44; Luke ii. 34; Rom. ix. 32, 33.—ΚΥΡΚΕ, ii. 430.

DISCOURSE IX.

A SECOND FIGURATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS, WITH APPROPRIATE EXHORTATIONS.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."—1 PET. ii. 11, 12.

THESE two verses, which form one sentence, bring before our minds a very important department of Christian duty; to the illustration and enforcement of which it is our intention to devote this discourse. The subject naturally divides itself into two parts: an injunction of duty, and a statement of the motives which urge compliance with that injunction. The duty enjoined is twofold: abstinence from fleshly lusts, and having the conversation honest among the Gentiles. The motives are these: "Ye are strangers and pilgrims." "These lusts war against the soul;" and abstinence from them, and the maintenance of an "honest conversation among the Gentiles," have a tendency to overcome their prejudices against both you and your religion, and to lead them to "glorify God in the day of visitation." To unfold, then, the meaning of these injunctions, and to point out the force of these motives, are the two objects which I have in view in the following remarks.

I. THE DUTIES ENJOINED.

§ 1. *Abstinence from "fleshly lusts."*

The first duty enjoined in the text is, "Abstinence from fleshly lusts." "Lusts," in the New Testament use of that word, signifies desires; strong desires; usually inordinate, unduly strong desires. The phrase "fleshly lusts" is often considered as meaning, desires for sensual enjoyment; desires which obtain their gratification by means of bodily organs. This is, however, very unduly to limit the signification of the term. Among the "works of the flesh," which are just the lusts of the flesh embodied, we find enumerated, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," as well as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness."¹

Flesh is the principal constituent of the human body, and the body is the visible part of the compound being, man. Hence flesh comes to be used for human nature, or mankind.² All mankind, since the fall, are depraved beings; and hence flesh is often, especially in the epistolary part of the New Testament, used to signify fallen human nature, or mankind as depraved.³ Agreeably to this use of the term flesh, fleshly desires are those desires which characterize mankind as depraved, which belong to, and are distinctive of, fallen human nature, — what are elsewhere termed "worldly lusts."⁴

The desires, including under that name the appetites and the passions, as well as those principles of which the word 'desires' is the appropriate technical name, form a very important part of our active nature, and are fitted to serve

¹ Gal. v. 19-21.

² Gen. vi. 13; Ps. lvi. 4; Matt. xxiv. 22; Rom. iii. 20; John i. 14.

³ Rom. vii. 18, viii. 5; Gal. v. 13.

⁴ Tit. ii. 12.

numerous useful and benevolent purposes. The desire of meat and of drink, the desire of knowledge, the desire of esteem, the desire of power, the desire of property, and other desires of a similar kind, belong essentially to human nature, and are as much the gifts of God as reason or conscience; and, like these higher faculties, are plainly intended and calculated to minister to man's improvement and happiness.

Some of these desires, as belonging to man as an embodied being, may be termed fleshly, as they cannot exist in purely spiritual beings; but these are not the desires here referred to. God never requires impossibilities; and to abstain from the desires we have mentioned is an impossibility. Those desires are neither virtuous nor vicious. They are parts of our constitution, which ought to be regulated and restrained when they come in competition with more important principles, which in a perfect state of human nature they never would. To eradicate them, if the thing were possible, which I believe it is not, would not be to improve, but to mutilate human nature. The amputation of arms and legs would not at all add to the beauty and usefulness of the human body; and just such an improvement on the mind, would be the depriving it of any of those active powers with which its infinitely wise and benignant Author has endowed it. That were to make us "new creatures" in a sense very different indeed from that in which the apostle uses the term.

In no part of our nature has the malignant influence of the fall been more apparent, than in our moral or active faculties; and in none of these active powers do we discern clearer marks of degeneration than in our desires. Our desires, in very many instances, seek their gratification in objects, the pursuit of which is proscribed by God, as his will is indicated by reason, by conscience, or by an express

revelation ; and where the object of desire is not in itself improper, the desire itself is often foolish, in consequence of its being disproportioned to the real or comparative value of the object ; and criminal, because unsubordinated to the will of God.

These are the desires which are here termed “fleshly lusts :” such desires as Adam was a stranger to while he continued innocent ; such desires as are now characteristic of the whole of his degenerate offspring. These desires, unlike the original principles referred to above, are not to be regulated, but destroyed. They are right hands that are to be cut off ; right eyes that are to be plucked out. As members of the old man, they are to be mortified ; as affections and lusts of the flesh, they are to be crucified.

To “abstain from fleshly lusts,” then, is to refrain from desiring that which is forbidden. It is, in other words, to yield obedience to the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet ;” thou shalt not desire that which God says thou shouldst not seek to obtain. Every desire of what is forbidden, what is criminal in itself, or criminal to us in our circumstances, is a “fleshly desire,” a desire which marks the being who indulges it as morally depraved ; and is not to be indulged, even in the slightest degree,—is not to be tampered with, but destroyed, strangled in its birth, repressed on its first rising.

But this is not all : To “abstain from fleshly lusts,” is to refrain from all inordinate or excessive desire, even of what is in itself lawful. It is in this form of the evil that Christians chiefly need to be warned against fleshly or worldly lusts. It is a sad mistake to suppose that our desires are lawful, because the objects of our desire are not forbidden. It may be that they are so far from being forbidden, that we would sin if we did not desire them ; and yet in desiring them inordinately, we may sin. Our desires may be

"fleshly desires," that is, desires rising out of the depravity of our nature, and at once exercising and increasing that depravity.

To desire anything seen and temporal, be it pleasure, knowledge, power, fame, money, or anything else, as absolutely necessary to, and sufficient for, our happiness, is a fleshly desire,—that is, in other words, to make that thing our God; and is in direct opposition to the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other God before me,"—to the breathing of the Spirit, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on all the earth whom I desire besides thee."¹ He who cherishes any desire unsubordinated to the will of God, cherishes a fleshly desire; and from this species of fleshly desire, as well as the former, Christians are commanded to "abstain." They are to "flee from idolatry," to "keep themselves from idols;" and "covetousness," that is, the inordinate desire of any created good, "is idolatry."²

These, then, are the two branches of the great law, "Abstain from fleshly lusts." Refrain from desiring whatever is forbidden. Refrain from inordinately desiring anything seen and temporal, however innocent in itself.

This, like every one of God's laws, is "holy, just, and good." It leaves abundant room for the healthy operation of natural desires. It allows us to desire everything that is really desirable, in the degree in which it is desirable. It only forbids us to indulge a desire which, whether gratified or not, must end in disappointment and ruin. The language of this law is, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?"³ Surely it is impossible not to recognise the divine wisdom and kindness in this spiritual commandment. It puts the check in the right place. It seeks to prevent the works of the flesh, by prohibiting the lusts of

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.

² 1 Cor. x. 14; 1 John v. 21; Col. iii. 5.

³ Prov. xxiii. 5.

the flesh. Human laws seek to dam up or divert the stream ; the divine law seeks to dry up the fountain.

From these few plain remarks, every person who wishes to understand the subject, may easily perceive what it is to abstain from fleshly lusts—a much more extensive and difficult duty than many are aware of ; but it may serve a good purpose, before closing this part of the discussion, to say a word or two on the way in which we are to yield obedience to this most reasonable command, “Abstain from fleshly lusts.”

The first remark to be made here is, that, in order to abstain from fleshly lusts, we must carefully guard against temptation. We are in continual danger ; there are always objects at hand fitted to provoke sinful desire in some of its forms ; and a busy, crafty adversary, is ever ready to take advantage of any opportunity that offers against us. We must therefore avoid placing ourselves in circumstances in which such desires are likely to be excited ; and when, by the providence of God, we are placed in such circumstances, we are to “keep our hearts with all diligence ;” and, sensible that all our keeping will not serve the purpose, we must give our hearts to God to keep them. We must “watch and be sober ;” “be sober and watch ;” “watch and pray ;” and this should be our prayer : “Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,”—the general name of fleshly, worldly desires. “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.”¹

We must recollect that nothing can overcome the world, and the things that are in the world—“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” and “the god of this world,” who by these subjugates us, and makes us his slaves—but the word of God dwelling in us. It is “our faith” of that word, or, to employ an equivalent

¹ Prov. iv. 23 ; 1 Tim. v. 6 ; 1 Pet. iv. 7, v. 8 ; Ps. cxix. 36, 37.

expression, that word believed, that "overcometh the world." It brings us under "the powers of the world to come," and thus "delivers us from this present evil world." Were the realities of eternity habitually before the mind, fleshly lusts could no more take root and flourish there, than "perishable materials be reared into structures amid the fires of the last day."¹

The grand preservation against "fleshly lusts" is to have the mind preoccupied with spiritual and heavenly affections; and to have the heart so full of holy happiness in the enjoyment of God, as that there is neither room nor relish in it for low-born, earthly, sensual, sinful enjoyments. The strong man can be put out of the house, and kept out of it, only by the stronger than he getting possession, and keeping possession of it. The true way of emptying a vessel of atmospheric air, and keeping that from reoccupying its place, is to fill it with some heavier fluid.

It is finely said by the good Archbishop I have so often quoted to you: "The happiness and pleasantness of the Christian's estate sets him above the need of the pleasures of sin. The apostle has said before: 'Since ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word,'—desire that word, wherein ye may taste more of his graciousness; and as that fitly urgeth the appetites' desire of the word, so it is strong to persuade this abstinence from fleshly lusts, yea, the disdain and loathing of them. If you have the least experience of the sweetness of his love, if you have but tasted of the crystal river of his pleasures, the muddy polluted pleasures of sin will be hateful and loathsome to you; yea, the best earthly delights that are, will be disrelished and unsavoury to your tastes. The embittering of the breasts of the world to the godly, by afflictions, doth something, indeed, to their weaning from

¹ Robert Hall.

them; but the breasts of consolation that are given them in their stead, wean them much more effectually.

“The true reason why we remain servants to these lusts, —some to one, some to another,—is because we are still strangers to the love of God, and those pure pleasures which are in him. Though the pleasures of this world be poor and low, and most unworthy of our pursuit, yet so long as men know no better, they will stick by those they have, such as they are. It is too often in vain to speak to men on this, to follow them with the apostle’s entreaty, ‘I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts,’ unless they that are spoken to, be such as he speaks of in the former words, such as have obtained mercy, and have tasted of the graciousness and love of him whose loves are better than wine. O that we would but seek the knowledge of this love; for, seeking it, we would find it; and, finding it, no force would be needful to pull the delights of sin out of our hands; we would throw them away of our own accord.” This is the true secret of yielding obedience to the commandment in the text, *Abstain from fleshly lusts*. O that we all were experimentally acquainted with it! How happy, how holy, should we be!

§ 2. “*Having a conversation honest among the Gentiles.*”

The second duty enjoined in the text is: “Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles.” “Conversation” here, and in many other places in the New Testament, does not mean colloquial intercourse, but conduct, general behaviour; as, “Only let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ;” “Be holy in all manner of conversation.”¹

The term “honest”² here, as in some other parts of the New Testament, is used in a somewhat obsolete sense; as

¹ Phil. i. 27; 1 Pet. i. 15.

² Καλῶς.

equivalent to honourable, respectable, morally beautiful and lovely; what commands esteem and reverence. "Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles," means, Let your conduct be such as will meet the approbation of God and good men, and such as even the heathen shall be obliged to venerate. It is materially the same exhortation as that given by the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest," venerable, "whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"¹—do these things.

The heathens were poor judges of Christian doctrine; there was much, too, in the Christian character, the excellence of which they could not at all appreciate. But when they saw Christians making it plain that no temptation could induce them to deviate from the straight path prescribed by the laws of temperance, and chastity, and justice, and love; rendering to no man evil for evil; meekly suffering many injuries, but inflicting none; denying themselves the comforts of life, to supply those who were destitute of its necessities; sacrificing and suffering everything, rather than violate conscience: they could not help feeling how beautiful and how awful goodness is; and a testimony was silently lodged in their hearts, in behalf of the religion of Christ, which no reasoning could have placed there. "There is a majesty in strict, serious, consistent goodness, that commands esteem and reverence from the worst of men."

The positive command includes the negative: Beware of everything in your conduct which might shock the moral feelings of a heathen; beware of anything which might lead him in any way to form an opinion dishonourable to "the worthy name by which ye are called," or open his

¹ Phil. iv. 8.

mouth in blasphemy against Him to whom it belongs. It is a most important duty incumbent on Christians, in all countries and ages, living among the men of the world,—remembering that, among other proofs of their Lord's graciousness to them, he has made them the guardians of his honour among men,—to act a part which shall command the respect and esteem of those around them, and to be careful that they let not "their good be evil spoken of."¹

It deserves notice, that the two duties enjoined are represented as very closely connected. It is by abstaining from fleshly lusts that their conversation was to be honest among the Gentiles. If they did not abstain from fleshly lusts, their conversation would be dishonourable, both to themselves and to their religion. If they did abstain from fleshly lusts, an honest, honourable behaviour would be a matter of course. The heart must be kept with all diligence, if we would wish the issues of life which flow from it to be satisfactory. Let the heart be rightly regulated: the tongue, the eyes, the hands, the feet, will all be properly employed. Let the thoughts and the desires be as they ought to be, and the actions will be unblameable. If the corrupt spring is not cleansed, the stream cannot be pure: if it is, the stream cannot but be pure.

It is a sad mistake to think, that the conduct will ever be what God would have it to be, till the heart is changed; that the conversation will ever be really comely, while men do not abstain from fleshly lusts. The heart must be "purified by the Spirit through the word," in order to man's being "holy in all manner of life and conversation." And it is not less true, and not less important, that the want of a comely conversation, of a holy behaviour, is a proof, whatever profession men make, that fleshly lusts still hold dominion within. As the fruit cannot be good if the tree

¹ Rom. xiv. 16.

is not good, so neither can the tree be good if the fruit is not good. The goodness of the tree is the necessary cause of the goodness of the fruit, and the goodness of the fruit is the only satisfactory evidence of the goodness of the tree.

So much for the illustration of this branch of our subject : The injunction of duty, " Abstain from fleshly lusts, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles." Refrain from desiring what is forbidden ; refrain from inordinately desiring anything that is seen and temporal ; and thus maintain a habitual behaviour so morally lovely and venerable, that even your heathen neighbours shall be constrained to take notice of you, and trace the obvious effect to the hidden cause, the goodness of your conduct to the goodness of your principles.

II. MOTIVES TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES.

Let us now turn our attention to the second branch of the subject : A statement of the motives which urge to compliance with this injunction of duty. The motives are drawn from the character and circumstances of Christians, and from the tendency and consequences, both of the course from which they are dissuaded, and of that to which they are urged. The motive deduced from the character and conduct of Christians, is contained in these words : You are " pilgrims and strangers." The motive drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course dissuaded from is, These fleshly lusts " war against the soul ;" and that drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course recommended is, " That the Gentiles, who spoke against them as evil-doers, might, by their good works which they beheld, glorify God in the day of visitation." Let us attend to these motives in their order, and endeavour to show their appropriateness and their power.

§ 1. *Motive drawn from the condition and character of Christians as "pilgrims and strangers."*

The first motive is drawn from the condition and character of Christians as "pilgrims and strangers." In the literal meaning of the words, those to whom they were originally addressed were pilgrims and strangers. They were chiefly Jews and proselytes, living among the heathen inhabitants of the regions of Asia Minor. Viewed even in this way, there is force in the statement, considered as a motive to the duty enjoined. 'The great body of those among whom you live are serving fleshly lusts; you are constantly exposed to the powerful influence of all but universally prevalent custom. Beware lest "evil communications corrupt good manners."' "

There can, however, be no reasonable doubt, that the words pilgrim and stranger are here used figuratively, and in a sense equally applicable to all Christians, in all countries and ages, as to those to whom they were originally addressed.¹ In a figurative sense all men may be said to be pilgrims and sojourners on earth. They are to continue here but for a short season,—they are, as it were, on a journey to their long home; and a consideration of this, places in a strong point of view the folly of men, in allowing their minds to be chiefly occupied with objects and pursuits belonging exclusively to a scene from which they must soon, and may suddenly, depart for ever, and which are in no degree fitted to prepare them for that permanent state into which, on leaving the present, they are to enter.

¹ The respective force of the two words *παροίκους* and *παρακείμενους* is well given by Bengel:—"Gradatio, non tantum ut in aliena domo—sed etiam ut in aliena civitate." Not only away from their own house, but from their own country—in the fullest sense from home. Neither of the words expresses what is peculiar in the signification of the English word "pilgrim."

But the Christian is, in a sense peculiar to himself, a pilgrim and stranger. He is a child of God, living among the children of the wicked one. He is a citizen of heaven, sojourning for a season on the earth. Heaven is his home. There is his treasure, and there is his heart also. His great object here is to promote the interests of the kingdom that is not of this world ; to pass through this land of strangers and enemies with as little injury as possible ; to get safe to the better land, and take as many as he can along with him.

For such a person to indulge in fleshly lusts, is in the highest degree incongruous. "There is," as Leighton remarks, "a diligence in his calling, and prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a Christian, but required of him ; but yet in comparison of his great and 'high calling,' as the apostle terms it, he follows all his other businesses with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not accounting very much how they go : his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can of entertainment and lodging, where he comes. If it be commodious, it is well ; but if not, it is no great matter. If he can find but necessaries, he can abate delicacies very well ; for where he finds them in his way, he neither can, nor, if he could, would he choose to stay there. Though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture, yet it is not his home ; he must, and he would, leave it. It is not for those born from above to *mind* earthly things. If Christians would but consider how little, and for how little a time, they are concerned in anything here, they would go through any estate, and any changes of estate, either to the better or the worse, with very composed, equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as

at home, and serve their lusts. Let them who have all their portion in this life, who have no more good to look for than what they can catch here, let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here. But you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures, laid up in heaven, and reserved there for you, let your lusts, your intense desires, not be fleshly, but spiritual; not earthly, but heavenly; let the spirit out-lust the flesh; let your hearts be there, and your conversation there. This is not the place of your rest, nor of your delights: unless you be willing to change, and to have your good things here, as some foolish travellers, that spend the estate they should live on at home in a little while, leaving it abroad among strangers. Will you, with profane Esau, sell your birth-right for a mess of pottage; sell eternity for a moment; and such pleasures, as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other?"

§ 2. *Motive drawn from the tendency of the course proscribed—
"It wars against the soul."*

The second motive is drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course dissuaded from. Those fleshly lusts, from which Christians are required to abstain, are said "to war against the soul."¹ They are injurious to our highest interests, the interests of the soul; for they are inconsistent with the peace of the soul; they are hostile to the improvement of the soul; and they are, if indulged in, fatal to the final happiness of the soul.

They are inconsistent with the peace of the soul. The Christian poet speaks the words of truth and soberness, when he says,—

¹ *Σεπάρειονται.* "Non modo, impediunt sed oppugnant."—BENGEL.
They not only hinder, but they oppose.

“ God is the source and centre of all minds—
Their only point of rest—
From Him departing they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.”¹

God is a suitable and a sufficient portion for man; and he, and he only, who takes up with Him as a portion, has, or can have, solid rest. He is kept “in perfect peace” while he trusts in God. Even a single fleshly lust destroys rest; for it takes the soul away from God, the only true rest. But this is not all: “fleshly lusts,” though all opposed to that desire after happiness in God which should be the master active principle in our minds, are by no means harmonious among themselves. They “war” with each other “in our members,”² and tear their unhappy victim in pieces. The lover of sinful pleasure, of power, of fame, of gain, knows well that the way in which those lusts drag or drive him along, is anything but the way of peace.

They are hostile to the improvement of the soul. The improvement of the soul consists in growth in the knowledge of God, and in true holiness; in increasing conformity to His image. Fleshly lusts are plainly inconsistent with this. They destroy that calm, collected state of mind, which is necessary to progress in knowledge and holiness; they occupy the time which ought to be devoted to the pursuits which conduce to spiritual improvement; and they utterly indispose to, they morally incapacitate the mind for, such pursuits. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”³ “They do not,” as has been justly said, “only divert from spiritual things for the time, but they habitually indispose it to every spiritual work, and make it earthly and sensual, and so unfit for heavenly things. Where these lusts, or any one of them, have dominion, the soul cannot at all per-

¹ Cowper.

² James iv. 1.

³ Rom. viii. 7.

form any spiritual duty,—can neither pray, nor hear, nor read the word aright; and, in as far as any of them prevail upon the soul of a child of God, they do disjoint and disable it from holy things.”¹

Finally, if indulged, those fleshly lusts will be fatal to the ultimate happiness of the soul. This is equally plain from the nature of things, and the express declarations of the word of God. A man under the influence of fleshly lusts, even if taken to heaven, could not be happy, must be miserable. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. The declarations of the word of God on the subject are most explicit: The end of a life in the flesh is death, eternal death. “We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”²

§ 3. *Motive drawn from the tendency of the course recommended.*

The third motive is drawn from the tendency and probable consequences of the course recommended. The tendency and probable result of their “having their conversation honest among the Gentiles,” in consequence of their abstaining from fleshly lusts, is stated to be this: “The Gentiles, who spoke against them as evil-doers, by their good works which they beheld, would be led to glorify God in the day of visitation.” The Gentiles, amidst whom the Christians addressed by Peter lived, spoke against them as evil-doers. The primitive Christians were very gene-

¹ Leighton.

² Rom. vi. 21, viii. 12, 13; Gal. vi. 7, 8.

rally represented as monsters of wickedness, as guilty of the most unnatural and atrocious crimes, as atheists and haters of mankind.¹ Even in that circumstance a reason might be found for Christians being peculiarly careful to indulge no disposition, and to follow no course of conduct, which could give even the slightest probability to these calumnious misrepresentations. It was of great importance that, when spoken evil of, it should be falsely—obviously, demonstratively falsely.

But this is not the motive here employed by the apostle. He counts on the natural effect of uniform good behaviour on the minds of the observers; and looking forward to a period which he calls “the day of visitation,” he encourages Christians by the hope that their “honest conversation” might be the means of bringing their heathen neighbours to a better mind, “to repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth;” and of leading them, instead of calumniating and cursing *them*, to glorify *God*.

“The day of visitation” is plainly the day of God’s visitation. God is said to visit men when he gives very decided proofs of his presence and power, either in works of judgment or of mercy. The phrase is used in the first sense in the following passage in the prophecy of Isaiah: “What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation that shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?”² It is used in the second sense, when God is said to have “visited Israel” in Egypt, and to have “visited and redeemed his people;” when he “raised up for them a horn of salvation in the

¹ They were represented as cannibals, magicians, infanticides, and as indulging in the most shocking impurities at their nocturnal assemblies.—Justin. Apolog. i. Œcumen. in loc.; Euseb. iv. 7, v. 1; August. de Civ. Dei, xviii. 53.

² Isa. x. 3.

house of his servant David;" and when God is said to have "visited the Gentiles to take from among them a people to his name;" and probably when Jerusalem is said not to have known "the time of her visitation," the day in which she might have known "the things which belonged to her peace."¹

If the phrase be understood in the first sense, the meaning is, that the good behaviour of the Christians would, when divine judgments came either on the Jewish or the pagan opposers of Christianity, induce even those who had formerly spoken evil of them, to admit the righteousness of the divine judgments, and glorify God by acknowledging how unfounded had been the reproaches which they had cast on his people.

If the phrase be understood in the second sense, then the meaning is: In the day when God visits these poor benighted Gentiles with his grace, your consistent, holy conduct, witnessed by them, will be one of the means employed by him in leading them to glorify him in embracing the gospel and devoting themselves to his service.

This latter view of the words seems, on the whole, best to harmonize with the scope and design of the whole passage. The consistent, holy conduct of Christians, has often been the means of promoting the conversion of unbelievers; and few considerations are more likely to weigh with a true Christian, as to the adoption or rejection of a particular course of conduct, than this. 'By such a course I may harden men in unbelief, embolden them in sin, smooth their path to perdition, and obstruct their way to the Saviour; by such another course I may rouse them to consideration, I may lead them to inquiry, I may soften prejudice, I may "convert the sinner from the error of his ways, save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."'²

¹ Ex. xiii. 19; Acts xv. 14; Luke i. 68, xix. 44. ² James v. 20.

The great ultimate object which every Christian should, which every genuine Christian does, contemplate, is the promotion of the glory of God. In his estimation, every desirable end is included in God's being glorified. This should be—this is, when he acts in character—his predominant design and thought, “that in all things God may be glorified.” “In what way shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I, who am engaged more than them all, set in with the heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare his excellence, his greatness, and his goodness?”¹

What formidable obstacles have the earthly-mindedness and the unlovely temper and behaviour of professed Christians thrown in the way of the glory of God being displayed in the progress and triumph of the religion of Christ among mankind! How have their “envyings, and strifes, and divisions”—all, as Paul says, the manifestation of carnality or fleshliness—how have these impeded, and all but “destroyed, the work of God!” Never can we reasonably hope for a better state of things till those who bear the name of Christ, abstaining from fleshly lusts, have their conversation more honest, more lovely, more venerable, among the Gentiles. When Zion, enlightened by the heavenly beams of sanctifying truth, arises and shines, then, not till then, shall “the Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.”²

Such, then, are the motives by which the apostle enforces his injunction on Christians to abstain from fleshly lusts, and to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles.

Brethren, this is our duty, as well as that of those to whom these words were originally addressed; and the motives presented are such as should influence us as well

¹ Leighton.

² Isa. lx. 1, 2.

as them. Abstinence from all that is forbidden or even doubtful, and the having a consistent, uniform, ornamental Christian behaviour, are duties incumbent on Christians in all countries, and in all ages,—duties so important and essential, that, if they be neglected, we can have no just claim to “the worthy name” which we bear. And are not we “pilgrims and sojourners before God, as were all our fathers?” Are we not by our profession “plainly declaring, that we are seeking a country, a better country, that is, an heavenly?” Do we not feel that the indulgence of inordinate desire for any earthly good disturbs our peace, and impedes our progress, and endangers our salvation? Ought we not to be desirous to be instrumental in advancing the glory of God, by promoting the conversion of men? Then let us, as pilgrims on earth and citizens of heaven, “set our affections on things above, and not on the things which are on the earth; let us seek the things that are above, at the right hand of God; let us mortify our members that are on the earth;” let us “crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts;” let us repress all the desires “which war against the soul;” let us not degrade the souls which God breathed into us, which Christ died to save, which the Holy Spirit is willing to make his dwelling-place, into slaves to those vile subordinate agents of the prince of darkness, which seek their destruction. Let us cherish all those desires and affections which give peace, and health, and vigour, and activity, to the hidden man of the heart; let us war against those fleshly lusts which war against our souls; let us “not be conformed to this world,” so full of, so domineered over by, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;” but let us be “transformed by the renewing of our minds,” and “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

In fine, pitying a world lying in wickedness and hurrying

to hell, let us do all we can to save them. If we can do little in any other way, let us at least, by a holy, consistent conduct, by exemplifying the purity and the peace of the religion of Christ, proclaim to all around us, "We are journeying towards the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." "Let your light, then, so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven."¹

¹ Col. iii. 1-5; Num. x. 29; Matt. v. 16.

DISCOURSE X.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT, AND THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN REFERENCE TO IT.

" Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—1 PER. ii. 13-15.

It has been remarked, that the moral precepts of Christianity are highly valuable, not only when viewed in reference to their primary and direct object, the direction and guidance of the movements of the inner and outer man, the regulation of the temper and conduct, the dispositions and actions, but also when considered in their subsidiary and indirect references, particularly in their bearing on the evidence of the divine origin of that system of revelation of which they form so important a part. That bearing is manifold. Let us look at it in its various phases. Were a book, consisting partly of doctrinal statements and partly of moral precepts, claiming a divine origin, put into our hands ; and were we finding on perusal the moral part of it fantastic and trifling, inconsistent with the principles of man's constitution, unsuitable to the circumstances in which he is placed, and incompatible with the great laws of justice and benevolence, we should enter on the examination of the evidence appealed to, in support of its high pretensions, under the influence of a strong and justifiable suspicion.

The study, for example, of the morality of the Talmud or of the Koran, would go far, before commencing an investigation of evidence, to satisfy an enlightened inquirer that its claims to a divine authority could not be satisfactorily supported.

On the other hand, when, in the New Testament, we find a moral code requiring all that is, and nothing that is not, "true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely," we cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that the system of which this forms a constituent part is worthy of being carefully inquired into; and we enter on the inquiry not merely with excited attention, but with a disposition to weigh candidly the evidence that can be brought forward of a supernatural origin. A man well acquainted with the preceptive parts of the New Testament, cannot help, unless he is completely devoid of candour, regarding the question of its origin as a grave and interesting one. He must feel in reference to its claims, not as he would in reference to the claims of a mere stranger, far less of one whom he knows to be a fool, and suspects to be a knave, but as he would in reference to the claims of a person of whose wisdom and worth he had reason to think highly. The claims are of such a kind, and the consequences of admitting them are so momentous, that even, with all these favourable presumptions, they are not to be admitted without satisfactory evidence; but they obviously deserve to be examined, and respectfully and diligently examined.

But this is not all. A person in a great measure ignorant of what true Christianity is, as a moral as well as a doctrinal system, may, without much difficulty, be persuaded by an ingenious sceptic or unbeliever, that that religion, like so many others, has originated in imposture or delusion, or in a mixture of both. It is to ignorance of Christianity, as its principal intellectual cause, that we are disposed to trace the fearfully extensive success of infidel

philosophy among the nominal Christians of the continent of Europe in the period immediately preceding the French Revolution. But on a person well informed as to the moral part of Christianity, all such ingenious sophistry will be thrown away. He is in possession of information which satisfies him that all those hypotheses, on one or other of which the denial of the truth and divinity of Christianity must proceed, are altogether untenable. There is a character of uniform, sober, practical good sense, belonging to the morality of the New Testament, which makes it one of the most improbable of all things, that its writers should have been the dupes either of their own imagination or of a designing impostor; and there is a sustained and apparently altogether unassumed and natural air of "simplicity and godly sincerity," which forbids us, except on the most satisfactory evidence, to admit that they who wore it were other than what they seem to be—honest men. To the question, Were the men who delivered these moral maxims fools or knaves, or a mixture of both? were they stupid dupes or wicked impostors? the only reasonable answer is, The thing is barely possible; it is in the very highest degree improbable. Evidence tenfold more strong than infidel philosophy has ever dreamed of, would be necessary to give anything like verisimilitude to any of these hypotheses, on one or other of which must be built the disproof of the claims of Christianity on the attention, and faith, and obedience of mankind.

There is still another aspect in which the morality of Christianity may be considered, in reference to the evidence of the divine origin of that religion. Viewed in all its bearings, it seems to be of the nature of a moral miracle. Compare the morality of the New Testament with the morality of ancient philosophy; compare Jesus with Socrates; and Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, with

Epictetus, or Plato, or Seneca, or Marcus Antoninus. The difference is prodigious; the superiority is immeasurable. Now, how are we to account for this difference, this superiority? On the supposition that the writers of the New Testament were uninspired men, we apprehend it is utterly unaccountable. Nothing but the admission, that they were men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God, can enable us satisfactorily to explain the undoubted fact, that the purest and most perfect system of morality which the world has ever seen,—the system that discovers the justest and widest views of the divine character and government, and the deepest insight into the recesses of human nature,—proceeded not from the philosophers of Egypt or of India, of Greece or of Rome, but from the carpenter of Nazareth and his uneducated disciples.¹

Such thoughts naturally rise in the mind of every reflecting man, on reading such a passage as that of which our text forms a part, and are well fitted to strengthen our conviction, that we have not followed “cunningly devised fables,” when we have yielded credence to the claims and doctrines of Jesus Christ and his apostles. It is, however, full time that we set ourselves to the consideration of the words which are to form the subject of our present discourse: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

The duty here enjoined, and the motive by which it is enforced, are obviously the two topics to which our atten-

¹ A fuller illustration of these remarks on the bearing of Christian morality on Christian evidence, will be found in the author’s *Introductory Essay* to Collins’ edition of Venn’s “*Complete Duty of Man*.”

tion must be successively directed in the sequel; but to illustrate either with advantage, it will be necessary to make a few remarks, having for their object to explain something that is obscure in the phraseology, and to disentangle something that is involved in the construction of the sentence which lies before us.

I. INTRODUCTORY EXPLICATORY OBSERVATIONS.

The word rendered "ordinance"¹ is the term which is usually and properly rendered "creature." It is the word that occurs when the gospel is commanded to be "preached to every creature," and is said to have been "preached to every creature under heaven;" when the "whole creation," or every creature, is said to "groan and travail in pain;" and when every one who is in Christ is said to be "a new creature."² The literal rendering is, "Submit yourselves to every human creature." Some interpreters, most unsuccessfully, have attempted to explain the passage on the principle that this is its meaning here.³ Our translators, perceiving that the nature of things, equally with the scope of the passage, made such a version inadmissible, have given to the word a figurative signification. They consider it as equivalent to ordinance, or institution, or appointment, all of which are, as it were, the creatures of those who ordain, institute, or appoint them.⁴

¹ Κτίσις.

² Mark xvi. 14; Col. i. 23; Rom. viii. 19-22; 2 Cor. v. 17.

³ Sherlock. Grotius conjectures that the original reading may have been κτίσις. The conjecture is ingenious, but entirely unsupported. It is a most instructive fact, that, so far as I know, no mere conjecture as to the original text of the New Testament has ever been confirmed by subsequent examination of codices.

⁴ Κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνην τὰς ἀρχὰς λίγει τὰς χειροποιήτας ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλείων, ἣ καὶ αὐτοὺς τοὺς βασιλεῖς κατίσκει καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων ἐτάχθησαν ἥτοι ἐτίθησαν, οἷον γὰρ ἡ γραφὴ καὶ τὴν θείαν, κτίσιν καλεῖν.—ECUMENIUS.

Still, however, it seems a strange injunction, "Submit yourselves to every human institution." Surely there are many human institutions or ordinances to which a Christian is not bound to submit; surely there are not a few human institutions or ordinances to which a Christian is bound not to submit. The injunction plainly requires limitation; and we apprehend it receives it.

The concluding phrase of the 13th verse, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well," is commonly connected with the words which immediately precede it, as if it were intended to express the object which the king, or supreme magistrate, has in view in appointing deputies. It appears to us far more natural to connect it with the word "ordinance;" and to view it as intended to define the particular class of human ordinances which the apostle refers to, when he commands Christians to be subject to every one of them. It is more than doubtful whether kings have always, or usually, had this as their object in appointing governors; but there can be no doubt this is the end of civil government, and is the reason why men are bound to submit to it. "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." This does not require any change in the translation; it only requires you to place a comma after the words, "sent by him."

This command, "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well," is, as it were, the trunk of the injunction; the phrases, "for the Lord's sake," and "whether to the king, as supreme, and to governors, as those sent by him," are, as it were, branches that spring out of it. According to the genius of the English language, the precept would run thus: 'Submit yourselves, for the Lord's sake, to every ordinance of man, for the punishment

of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well, whether to the king, as supreme, or to governors, as to them who are sent by him.'

This mode of construing the passage not only gives a definite reference to the very general term "ordinance," or institution; it also enables us to account for the apostle using the somewhat strange expression in reference to civil government, "*ordinance of man, or human institution*, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." The persons immediately addressed by the apostle were Jews, or proselytes who had imbibed Jewish modes of thought. Jews held themselves bound to be subject to the *divine* ordinance of civil magistracy, as laid down in their Scriptures. That ordinance, whether embodied in Moses or in the Judges, or in the Davidical kings, they regarded as entitled to obedience; but as to *human* institutions for this purpose, they seem very generally to have doubted, and many of them to have explicitly denied, that they were obligatory on the chosen people of God. If they yielded obedience, it was rather as a matter of expediency than of obligation: they submitted "for wrath's sake," that is, to avoid punishment, rather than "for conscience sake," that is, because God had so willed it. These views were very probably carried by many of the Jewish converts into their new profession; and there seems to be a peculiar propriety in the apostle—after having described their privileges and immunities as Christians in such lofty language, borrowed from the peculiarities of the Jewish people under the former economy; after having represented them as "the chosen race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the people of God,"—putting them in mind that those privileges were all of a spiritual nature, and that with regard to human institutions, and especially with regard to human institutions for the purposes of civil government,

they were just on a level with the rest of mankind, with the rest of their fellow-citizens,—possessed of the same rights, liable to the same obligations.

II. THE DUTY ENJOINED : SUBJECTION TO THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT, IN THE PERSONS OF ALL ITS LEGAL ADMINISTRATORS.

We are now prepared to proceed to consider the duty here enjoined on Christians : Subjection to the civil government of the country where they reside, in the persons of all its legal administrators. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well : whether to the king, as supreme ; or to governors, as those sent by him.”

The description of civil government here given first calls for consideration. It is described as “an ordinance or institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well.” The great design of civil government is, to protect the liberties, properties, and lives of mankind, living together in society. For this purpose, laws with suitable sanctions are enacted and executed, and officers are created for the enactment, promulgation, and execution of these laws. With reference to civil government, he and he only is an evil-doer who violates the law ; and it is enough to entitle a man, in the estimation of the magistrate, to the appellation of one who does well, if he but obey the law. With sin, as sin, the magistrate has nothing to do. It is only when sin becomes crime, a violation of law, an infringement of civil order, that it comes under his cognizance. The design, then, of magistracy is “for the punishment of evil-doers,” who break the laws enacted for the protection of liberty, property, reputa-

tion, and life; and "for the praise," that is, for the reward, of those "who do well" by keeping these laws; giving them that protection and encouragement which, as has been very justly remarked, are the only rewards which good subjects can reasonably expect from their civil governors.¹

Civil government is further described as "an ordinance of man," or "a human institution," for this purpose. It is, indeed, the doctrine of the New Testament, that civil government, in one sense, and that an important one, is a divine institution, an ordinance of God; but that doctrine, rightly understood, is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine that, in another sense, it is a human institution, the ordinance of man. Civil government is of God, so as to lay a foundation for a divine moral obligation on those subject to it to yield obedience. Some have held that magistracy is of God merely as all things are of God,—as the famine and the pestilence, as slavery and war, are of him. Those who take this view err by defect; for this could lay no foundation for a claim on obedience. Others err by excess, who hold that magistracy is a direct, express divine institution. It does not stand on the same foundation as the priesthood under the law, or the Christian ministry under the gospel. The magistracy of the Jews under the law was the result of a direct divine appointment; but not the magistracy of any other people. It does not stand even on the same ground as marriage, which was formally instituted. It occupies similar ground with the social state, agriculture, or commerce. It naturally rises out of the constitution of men's minds, which is God's work, and the circumstances of their situation, which are the result of his providence; and it is highly conducive to the security and well-being of mankind, which we know must be agree-

¹ "Reward cannot properly be the sanction of *human laws*."—WABURTON.

able to the will of Him whose nature as well as name is love, and whose tender mercies are 'over all his works.

All this is perfectly consistent with civil government being a human ordinance or institution. It is the work of man's faculties, called forth by the circumstances in which he is placed, out of which arises the variety of form which the general institution bears in different countries and in different ages : thus far it is the work of man ; and it is the work of God, just inasmuch as he endows man with these faculties, and places him in the circumstances which call them forth to exertion. To borrow the illustration of one of the greatest of our writers on the subject of government : "To say, because civil magistracy is ordained of God, therefore it cannot be the ordinance of man, is as if you said, ' God ordained the temple, therefore it was not built by masons ; he ordained the snuffers, therefore they were not made by a smith.' " ¹

Now, the duty of Christians to this "human ordinance" of civil magistracy, is to "submit themselves" to it, practically to acknowledge its authority. It is the duty of a Christian to yield obedience to all laws of the government under which he lives, that are not inconsistent with the law of God. When the human ordinance contradicts the divine ordinance, requiring us to do what God forbids, or forbidding us to do what God requires, the rule is plain : "We ought to obey God rather than man." ²

Nothing short of this, however, can warrant a Christian to withhold obedience from a law of the government under which, in the providence of God, he is placed ; and even when conscience may compel him to non-obedience, he is quietly and patiently to suffer the penalty which the law imposes on his non-obedience. While obliged by the law of God in such a case not to obey the law of man, he is

¹ Harrington.

² Acts v. 29.

equally obliged, while the government continues to be acknowledged by the community of which he forms a part, not to resist it. He may, he ought to, use every means which the constitution of his country puts in his power to have the law improved;¹ but while it continues in force, however unwise and iniquitous, if it does not require him to sin, he must obey it; and even where it does require him to sin, while he must by no means obey it, he must submit to the punishment, however unjust, which the law denounces against him.²

One of the most important modes of submission to civil government is the payment of tribute; and this, like all the other duties we owe to our rulers, is to be regulated by the principle already laid down. We must not refuse, we must not seek to evade, the payment of a tax, merely because we think it unwise or unequal. It is only in the case of government requiring us to pay a tax for what we consider as a sinful object, that we are entitled to refuse compliance; and even in that case we are bound to submit to the penalty which the law appoints for our non-compliance.

Under the general name of submission are included also that respect and reverence with which the institution of

¹ "A *timely, steady, and mild* resistance, on *legal* grounds, to every unlawful stretch of power (as in the well-known case of the ship-money), will prove the most effectual means, if *uniformly* resorted to, for preventing the occurrence of those desperate and extreme cases which call for violent and dangerous remedies."—ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

² "Certes, ce n'est pas nous qui contesteront aux lois le droit d'être respectées, mais une distinction naturelle se présente. Une loi injuste doit être respectée par moi, quoique injuste, lorsqu'elle ne blesse que mon intérêt, et mes concitoyens également lésés lui doivent le même respect. Mais une loi immorale, une loi irréligieuse, une loi qui m'oblige de faire ce que ma conscience et la loi de Dieu condamnent, se l'on ne peut fait révoquer, il faut la braver, le principe, loin d'être subversif, est le principe de vie des sociétés. C'est la lutte de bien contre le mal."—VINET.

civil government should be regarded by all subjects. "To despise government, and to speak evil of dignities," are sins most decidedly condemned in the law of Christ; and the Christian apostle has given his sanction to the command of the Jewish lawgiver: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people." Words are the signs of thought, the expressions of sentiment and feeling. They are therefore far from being harmless in themselves, and they are very far from being harmless in their consequences. The man who indulges his tongue in contumelious revilings against the authorities of the land, using language fitted to bring government itself into contempt, is a dangerous enemy of his country's weal, as well as a direct and open violator of the express command of God.¹

It is highly desirable that the personal character of the magistrate should give additional lustre to his official dignity; while it is deeply to be regretted that the follies and faults of those who fill public stations have so often excited a most pernicious influence, in diminishing the authority of the laws, by making it impossible personally to respect their administrators. It is well remarked by Hooker, that "great caution must be used, that we neither be emboldened to follow them in evil, whom for authority's sake we must honour, nor induced in authority to dishonour them whom, as examples, we must not follow."

To prevent misapprehensions, it is needful to remark here, that particular civil governments may be so faulty in their constitution, or so corrupt in their administration, that it may not only be lawful, but obligatory, on the subjects, to seek improvement by thorough change, depriving of power those who have abused it, and organizing a new form of civil rule which will answer its objects; and that there is certainly nothing in the law of Christ which exempts his

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 10; Ex. xxii. 28; Acts xxiii. 5; James iii. 1-6.

followers from an obligation to act the part of good citizens in such circumstances. But it is also of importance to add, that nothing short of the demonstrated impracticability of the improvement of a government by constitutional measures, and of the moral certainty of the great body of the citizens being really desirous of a change, can warrant individuals to refuse submission to the form of civil rule under which they live, whatever may be the imperfections and faults by which it is characterized.

It deserves notice, also, before we close our observations on this head, that the apostle's command is, "Submit yourselves to *every* ordinance of man for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." These words, taken by themselves, might mean: Submit yourselves to civil government, whatever form it may wear—monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, or any conceivable combination of these elements; and there can be no question that in this sense the words would express the Christian's duty. It is equally the duty of the Christian, if he live in Austria, to submit to monarchy; if he live in America, to submit to democracy; if he live in Great Britain, to submit to our mixed government of king, lords, and commons. But from the context it is plain that the reference is not to different forms of civil rule in different countries, but to the different organs of civil rule in the same country. "Whether to the king," that is, to the Roman emperor, within the limits of whose wide dominions those addressed by the apostle lived; "or to governors sent by him," that is, to the proconsuls, or procurators, deputed by the emperor to perform the offices of government in the distant parts of the empire. To all the officers by whom the law is administered, Christians are to render obedience. Whether they be persons in a higher station or in a lower; whatever be the nature or the denomination of their office; whether their

jurisdiction extend over the whole land, or be limited to a county or to a parish ; to every one of the persons appointed to execute the laws, we are bound to render obedience in all those particulars in which he is authorized to demand it. So much for the illustration of the duty enjoined by the apostle.

III. THE MOTIVE TO THE DUTY OF CIVIL OBEDIENCE :
“FOR THE LORD’S SAKE.”

Let us now turn our attention to the motives by which the apostle enforces this duty. These are unfolded in the words, “For the Lord’s sake ; for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” “The Lord” is here, as generally in the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians are to yield obedience to the civil government under which they live, “for *his* sake :” for the sake of his commandment ; for the sake of his example ; for the sake of his cause.

First, Christians are to obey the civil government under which they live, for the sake of Christ’s commandment. Now, what is his commandment ? This was his commandment when he was on earth, “Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” that is, give to the civil government its due ; and if you look into the writings of the apostles, you will find that the due of civil government is obedience, tribute, and honour. These apostles had the mind of Christ, and they thus express it : “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power ? Do that which is

good, and thou shalt have praise of the same : for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also : for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to them all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour." "Put them in mind," says Paul to Titus, "to be subject to principalities and powers ; to obey magistrates." They who "despise government," who are "presumptuous, self-willed," and "not afraid to speak evil of dignities," are, according to Peter, among "the unjust whom the Lord knows how to reserve unto the day of judgment to be punished."¹

It may be said "the commandment of the Lord," in these words, "is pure,"² clear as crystal ; but how are we to know what is that civil government to which they refer ? We know that the civil government established among the Jews was God's ordinance to them ; we know that the Roman government was God's ordinance to the primitive Christians ; but how are we to know what civil government is God's ordinance to us ? The true answer to that is given by Dr Paley : "It is the will of God that the happiness of human life be promoted. Civil society conduces to that end. Civil societies cannot be upholden, unless in each the interest of the whole society be binding on every part and member of it. So long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconveniency, it is the will of God that the established government be

¹ Matt. xxii. 21 ; Rom. xiii. 1-7 ; Tit. iii. 1 ; 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10.

² Ps. xix. 8.

obeyed." We have not the same means of judging of any particular government that it is God's ordinance to us, as those had whom the apostles Paul and Peter plainly told, that the Roman government was the ordinance of God to them ; but we have sufficient means of ascertaining that point ; and when, by their use, we have come to the conclusion, that the government under which we live is so, then the obligation to obedience, arising out of the commandment of our Lord, binds us as strongly as it bound them.

Happily for us, my brethren, there is no difficulty in coming to a determination. On the one hand, our civil constitution is based on so many just principles—is upon the whole, compared to most other governments, so well administered, and contains within itself such a deep-seated and powerful spring of improvement, that we can have no reasonable doubt that, though an ordinance of man, it is also the ordinance of God to us ; while, on the other hand, the ruling power in this country, supported as it is by the great body of the subjects giving their approbation to the principles on which it is founded, is so powerful, that to think of resisting it would not only be highly criminal, but folly almost amounting to madness. "For the Lord's sake," then, let us submit ourselves to this ordinance of man, whether to the queen, as supreme, or to inferior magistrates, as commissioned by her.

Secondly, Christians are to obey the civil government under which they live, for the sake of the example of the Lord. We are distinctly informed by our apostle in the context, that "Christ has left us an example, that we should walk in his steps."¹ It is the duty of his followers "to be in the world as he was in the world," and to "walk even as he also walked." "The life of our Lord Jesus should be manifested in our mortal bodies ;" our lives

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

should be the counterpart of his. There is caution, however, no doubt necessary, in applying the example of Christ as a rule of conduct. We ought always to act on the principles on which he acted; and when our circumstances coincide with his, we cannot too exactly copy his conduct. But his circumstances and ours are often very different; so that an action which was right in him, might be wrong in us. Knowing the hearts of men, for example, he spoke to hypocrites in a way that it would be presumptuous in us to speak to any man. His situation, in reference to the civil government under which he was placed, was so different from that in which we stand to the civil government under which we are placed, that we need caution in reasoning from the manner in which he acted to the manner in which we ought to act; yet still his example here, and in every other instance, is replete with instruction. He made it plain that he would not permit political considerations to turn him aside from his great work. The political state of the world very much needed improvement; but his directly interfering in it would have thrown obstacles in the way of gaining his great object,—an object which, when gained, will ultimately put everything right. He did not “cry nor strive.” He took no part in the political controversies of his times. “He did no violence;” he stirred up no seditions.¹ He rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s. We should err if we were to draw the conclusion, that we ought to have as little to do with politics as Jesus Christ had; for our place, as citizens of a free commonwealth, is very different from his, who had no political standing at all in the existing forms of rule, whether Jewish or Roman. But we are taught, that as Christians we are to place the religious above the political,—the kingdom not of this world, above every worldly kingdom; that the citizen of heaven

¹ Isa. xlii. 2, liii. 9.

must not be sunk either in the citizen of Britain or the citizen of the world; that where there is no prospect of our improving political institutions, it is wisest to let them alone; and that if he was uniformly obedient and submissive to one of the worst of human governments, it ill becomes us to be factious and seditious and disobedient under a system of civil rule, which, though far, very far indeed, from being perfect, is yet among the best which the world has yet seen.

It is, however, chiefly, we apprehend, to the bearing which their submission to the civil government was likely to have on the *cause* of Christ, that the apostle refers in the words before us. I therefore go on to remark, in the third place, that Christians are bound to obey the civil government under which they are placed, for the sake of the cause of the Lord. Among the false charges brought against the primitive Christians, this was one,—they were bad subjects; and their refusal to join in the rites of the idolatrous religion, sanctioned by public authority, seemed to give plausibility to the charge. It deserves notice, that this is a charge which in all ages has been brought against the people of God by their enemies. The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, when God turned again the captivity of his people, branded Jerusalem as “the rebellious and the bad city,—a city hurtful unto kings and provinces, whose inhabitants had moved sedition of old time;” and Haman, “that wicked adversary and enemy,” described the Jews as “a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of the kingdom; whose laws were diverse from all people, and who keep not the king’s laws: whom it was therefore not for the king’s profit to suffer.”¹ “There was a strong report,” says one of the fathers of the Church,² commenting on the

¹ Ezra iv. 12; Esth. iii. 8.

² Chrysostom.

parallel passage in the Epistle to the Romans, "that the apostles were seditious and innovators, and that their principles and practices tended to the subversion of the common laws." So far as this report was credited, it was plainly calculated, in a variety of ways, to impede the progress of Christianity; and nothing was so much fitted to give currency and credit to the calumny, as a neglect or violation on the part of Christians of the injunction contained in the text. This was sure to expose them to the vengeance of the laws, and so to deprive them of the power of extending Christianity; while discredit was cast on the Christian cause, as hostile to the order of civil society. On the contrary, nothing was better fitted to live down the calumny, than a scrupulous and conscientious compliance with the injunction. When it was found that no class of subjects so readily obeyed all the laws of the empire, except those which required what was inconsistent with the laws of Christ, while even in this case they meekly submitted to the consequences of their non-compliance, though these often were torture and death; that while they refused to give their property for the support of idolatry, they patiently took the spoiling of their goods, and readily rendered "tribute to whom tribute was due, custom to whom custom was due;" the conclusion must have forced itself on every reflecting mind: 'These are peaceable, orderly men, and there is nothing in their religion inconsistent with the welfare of the state.' In this way their well-doing was fitted to "put to silence"¹ the ignorant and malignant calumnies of their foolish and unprincipled accusers. Such an even tenor of good conduct, such an onward course of

¹ The word *φισμαῖν*, rendered *put to silence*, properly signifies to muzzle; which, in one expressive word, shows the apostle's opinion of these adversaries of Christianity. They belonged to the *νόμις*, of which Paul warns the Philippians (chap. iii. 2).

well-doing, was better fitted to silence adversaries than the most elaborate apologies and defences.

The principle on which the apostolic injunction proceeds, is one applicable to all countries and ages. If Christians wish to recommend the religion they profess, they must be exemplary in the discharge of all the duties of domestic and social relative life; and few things are more fitted to prejudice worldly men against religion generally, or against particular forms of religion, than the manifestation on the part of their professors of a disposition to evade the laws, or violate the order, or disorganize the constitution, of civil society.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten, that the interests of genuine Christianity may be as really injured by the maintenance and exemplification of slavish principles, as by the maintenance and exemplification of revolutionary principles; and that the true medium is that so happily described in the verse which follows our text: the thinking, and feeling, and acting as free men, guarding against making our liberty a cloak of wickedness, conducting ourselves always as the servants of God, honouring all men, loving the brotherhood, fearing God, honouring the king. Thus have I briefly illustrated the apostolic injunction, "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well;" and the powerful motive by which it is enforced, "for the Lord's sake,"—from a regard to the law, the example, and the cause of him who is Lord of all, and, with a peculiar emphasis, "OUR Lord Jesus."

The discourse has been throughout practical, so that it stands in little need of what is ordinarily called improvement. Almost all that requires to be said in this way is, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."¹

¹ John xiii. 17.

It is an easy matter for us to do them, when compared with those to whom they were originally addressed ; and of course, if we fail, our conduct is doubly criminal.

I conclude with a reflection which, I am sure, must have already suggested itself to your minds. If we should submit ourselves to "every ordinance of man for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well," should we not much more submit ourselves to every ordinance, every institution, every appointment of God, all of which have for their object the glory of his great name and the happiness of his intelligent creatures ? If we ought to be obedient to human governments, though necessarily imperfect, faulty both in their constitution and administration, how readily should we yield obedience to the divine government, which both in principle and administration is absolutely perfect, being formed and conducted by him who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, and power, and righteousness, and benignity ! If we have human governors to whom our bodies are subject, should we not much rather in our spirits be subject to the King of souls ? "He is a Rock, his work is perfect ; all his ways are judgment : a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he." "His work" as a legislator, governor, or judge, "is most honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth for ever."¹ How high a privilege should we account it to be the subjects of such a government ! What folly and wickedness must it be to neglect or violate any of its laws ! What madness to expose ourselves to the consequences of such violation ! If, then, every soul should be subject to the powers that be, though they once were not, and may very likely ere long cease to be ; should not every soul be subject to that power which was, and is, and ever shall be ? Is it not of supreme im-

¹ Deut. xxxii. 4 ; Ps. cxi. 3.

portance that we should be loyal subjects of the King of the universe, the immortal, invisible, only wise God?

Oh, let all of us see that our relations to Him be in a safe and satisfactory state! Have we acquainted ourselves with Him as he has manifested himself "in the face" of his only-begotten, his visible image, the great revealer of the unseen, the invisible One; and are we at peace with him? It once was otherwise; we were at war with him. Mad, impious rebellion! Has the manifestation of his authority and grace quelled the rebel principles within, brought every high thing down into subjection to him, and sweetly constrained us to cast from us the weapons we had so foolishly, so wickedly, wielded against him? If not, the sooner such a change takes place, the better; for "HE beareth not the sword in vain."

If this all-important change has taken place, let us prove that it has taken place by submitting cordially to his authority, as administered by HIM whom he has "set on his holy hill of Zion." Let us "serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives." Let us "walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless;" let us "count his precepts concerning all things to be right; let us hate every false way;"¹ and let us show our supreme regard to his authority, equally, by cheerfully doing everything which our civil rulers require of us, however disagreeable to us, if only not inconsistent with his law, because he has commanded it; and by obstinately refusing to do anything which they command us, however deeply it may involve our worldly interests, which is inconsistent with his law, because he has forbidden it.

It is, indeed, inward subjection to HIS authority, that alone can secure high-principled and duly regulated subjection to every lawful inferior authority. It has been justly

¹ Luke i. 6, 74, 75; Ps. cxix. 128.

remarked, that when the spirit of the high-minded sinner has been brought down by the gospel, and he has bowed with a broken and contrite heart to the sceptre of the Saviour's grace, the humble subjection of his conscience to God, which then takes place, involves in it a meek and humble spirit of submission to all the authority which that God has vested in any of his creatures. The obedience which he yields as a child, as a servant, as a subject, being yielded from religious principles, becomes obedience to God; and "whatsoever he does" henceforward, "he does it heartily as to the Lord, and not to man."¹ And hence it is that the Christian minister feels that he never acts more the part of a good citizen, never employs means more fitted for improving the whole scene of domestic and social and political life, than when he urges on men "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" and beseeches them, on the ground of the great atonement, to be "reconciled to God."²

¹ Col. iii. 23.

² The whole subject of this discourse is more fully discussed by the author, in his treatise entitled "The Law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience, especially in the Payment of Tribute."

END OF VOL. I.



